

THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN * BRILL

Popular Government and Oligarchy in Renaissance Italy

Christine Shaw



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POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND
OLIGARCHY IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

THE
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POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND OLIGARCHY IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

BY

CHRISTINE SHAW



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On the cover: Lion, symbol of the Popolo, with arms of the city of Siena, within the initial letter of the first page of a register of the names of the members of the reggimento, the Libro della Maddalena, 1497. By kind permission of the Archivio di Stato, Siena (Concistoro 2318).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGSimancas, E	Simancas, Archivo General, Estado
ASBol	Bologna, Archivio di Stato
ASF	Florence, Archivio di Stato, Archivio della Repubblica
ASF, MAP	Florence, Archivio di Stato, Medici avanti il Principato
ASG, AS	Genova, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Segreto
ASMan, AGonzaga	Mantua, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Gonzaga
ASMi, ASforzesco	Milan, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Sforzesco
ASMo, ASE	Modena, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Segreto Estense
ASS	Siena, Archivio di Stato

PREFACE

Among the wide variety of regimes governing the towns and cities of Renaissance Italy—whether they were independent republics, the seats of lords or princes, or subject communities that were part of a larger state—popular government and oligarchy were not opposites, or even opposite ends of a spectrum. Nor were they necessarily antagonistic, and certainly not mutually exclusive. This is not a book about two radically, clearly distinct forms of government.

Popular government here is taken to mean a broadly-based government in which a significant proportion of adult male citizens from various social groups could participate in the governing councils, and would be eligible to hold elective political and administrative offices. Such governments were more common in fifteenth-century Italy than might be supposed if viewed from the perspective of sixteenth-century Italy, where oligarchic regimes with participation in government restricted to a closed, economically and socially privileged, often hereditary, group have been regarded as the norm. In practice, most civic governments in Renaissance Italy were a mixture of popular government and oligarchy. At the heart of many broadly-based regimes would be a smaller group of men who tended to hold important political offices more frequently than their fellows, and whose opinion carried greater weight in councils. On the other hand, oligarchic regimes could be tempered by institutions or procedures or traditions that provided opportunities for those outside the closed circle to express their opinions, accept or reject policies and proposals, or take part in electoral processes for offices they could not aspire to hold themselves. In both types of regime, the concept of the *popolo* as the embodiment of the constitutional, the moral authority on which the political system rested could, at moments of crisis and political turmoil, be brought into play.

General discussions about developments in political society and institutions in fifteenth-century Italy have little to say about popular government. This might seem odd, given that the central topic of debate has been the nature of the state. Analysis of the factors preventing the unification of Italy into a nation-state, the question that preoccupied nineteenth-century Italian historians, has been superseded

by analysis of the nature of the Renaissance state, or the regional state, the territorial state, the composite state, the modern state or the precursor of the modern state. Connected with these are reflections on the nature of the relations between central government and the periphery, on factions, on patronage and clientage, on court society, and on the formation of patriciates. When the nature of popular government would seem to be a pertinent field of enquiry, to say the least, for historians discussing most of these subjects, why does it figure so little?

The answer seems to be an assumption that popular government had lost out to oligarchy long before. Discussions of popular government focus on the communes of the thirteenth century. By the early fourteenth century, the main question for historians has become the transition from communal government to signorial government, from republics to submission to a more or less legitimate lord or prince. Whether for independent republic, subject town or base of signorial power, it is assumed that the prevailing form of civic government in the fourteenth century was already oligarchical. Debate about why popular governments would become oligarchical have, therefore, focused on the political society and institutions of the earlier period.¹

A link has been suggested between the development of larger and more powerful states in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the fostering of oligarchy, as an alliance between the 'principal men' of subject communities and the central political authorities 'made clearer the differences between a restricted governing oligarchy and the mass of the population'.² Central governments, it has been argued, favoured oligarchies in subject communities because they made

¹ For useful discussions of the historiography and of the issues, see Giorgio Chittolini's introduction to *idem* (ed.), *La crisi degli ordinamenti comunali e le origini dello stato del Rinascimento* (Bologna, 1979), pp. 7–50; Giorgio Chittolini, 'Alcune considerazioni sulla storia politico-istituzionale del tardo Medioevo: alle origini degli "stati regionali"', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 2 (1976), pp. 401–19; Massimo Vallerani, 'La città e le sue istituzioni. Ceti dirigenti, oligarchia e politica nella medievistica italiana del Novecento', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 20 (1994), pp. 165–230; Renato Bordone, 'I ceti dirigenti urbani delle origini comunali alla costruzione dei patriziati', in Renato Bordone, Guido Castelnuovo and Gian Maria Varanini, *Le aristocrazie dai signori rurali al patriziato* (Roma-Bari, 2004), pp. 37–120; Gian Maria Varanini, 'Aristocrazie e poteri nell'Italia centro-settentrionale dalla crisi comunale alle guerre d'Italia', in *ibid.*, pp. 121–93.

² Chittolini, 'Introduzione' to *La crisi degli ordinamenti comunali*, p. 45.

control easier; stronger government favoured oligarchy at the centre, too.³ Leaving aside the question of whether this link can in fact be demonstrated⁴, the argument is that the stronger state—whether Renaissance or territorial, regional or modern—encouraged oligarchy, not that it created it. The die had been cast long before.

Consequently, general arguments about popular government do not encompass the fifteenth century, and general arguments about political society and the state in the fifteenth century do not encompass popular government. Studies of individual Italian towns or regions in this period, however, can have much of value to tell about popular government and the shift towards oligarchy, as will be abundantly evident from Part II of this book. A wealth of material for reflection has been found in the works of historians writing about towns from the Alps to the island of Sicily. So again the question arises, why has this not fed into the general arguments and theories? One explanation appears to be the persistence of the idea that popular government should be defined as government in which representatives of the trade guilds, the *arti*, had an important, if not dominant, role.⁵ Why this notion should be so persistent is difficult to understand, in the light of the sophistication of the debates about the nature of the ‘popolo’ in the thirteenth century, which have moved well beyond this simplistic view, and the fact that this was not how contemporaries would have defined a ‘governo popolare’. Whatever the reasons for it, such equivocation about the nature of popular government in Renaissance Italy has stood in the way of reflection on it, and on the relation between popular government and oligarchy. As there is so little guidance on these problems in the literature, how can they be addressed?

The approach adopted here is to study popular government and the transition to oligarchy in one city, Siena, and then to take themes and questions from this case study to provide a framework for an analysis of popular government and oligarchy in other Italian towns and cities. The example of Siena will be treated as a starting-point for the broader analysis, not as a model. It provides a good basis

³ Alberto Aubert, *La crisi degli antichi stati italiani (1492–1521)* (Florence, 2003), p. 86.

⁴ See below, Chapter 9.

⁵ See below, pp. 149–51.

because Siena's government changed over a few decades in the second half of the fifteenth century from being one of the most broadly-based of any major Italian city to one dominated by an oligarchic group, with an incipient *signoria*. Looking at developments in this one city raises a broad range of issues concerning the nature of civic government and political society in Renaissance Italy and the transformations they were undergoing. Examining in detail the developments in one city also brings out the complexity of the process of change, of the links between institutional reform and innovation and the change in political thinking and social attitudes that they could express, the resistance change could arouse, the reversals suffered by those promoting new ways of governing their community, and the influence of external example and pressure. Taking a line from the case-study of Siena helps to give some direction through what would otherwise threaten to be a confusing morass of information on other towns and cities.

In Part II of the book, the focus widens to encompass the whole of Italy, to examine the nature of popular government and of oligarchy, how one might give way to the other, how they might co-exist, what ideas about government, politics and society might underpin them. How far directions, suggestions or threats from outside the community, from political superiors or other powers shaped civic governments will also be considered. What was the influence of war, and in particular, of the Italian Wars that brought conquest and occupation by ultramontane powers? Did the French and Spanish favour oligarchy in the towns that came under their rule, or their influence? Did the Italian Wars deliver a death-blow to popular government in Italy?

A deliberate effort has been made to cover a range of urban communities, from small towns to powerful cities, and situated throughout Italy, not just in central and northern Italy, the 'Centro-Nord' commonly regarded not only as the stronghold of powerful civic government, but as constituting a discrete political system from that of southern Italy. It would be pointless to try to argue that there were not great differences between the provincial towns of the kingdom of Naples and the great cities of the Lombard plain, but there were other ways in which the *università*, the urban political communities, of the South belonged to the same political world as their counterparts, the *comuni* of the North, and to compare their institutions is not perverse. Accordingly, this study ranges from Piedmont and

Venice to Sicily. It would indeed have been perverse to ignore the outstanding profusion of studies on Florence, and several important developments in the government of Florence are central to the concerns of this book. But Florence has not been taken as the norm, the benchmark. No town or city could be, such was the range of variations on the basic structure of legislative councils and executive committees that was the template for civic government throughout Italy, even in states ruled by princes, not republics. Particular attention has been paid to two other cities, Bologna and Genoa. Bologna was chosen for closer study because oligarchically-inclined Sieneese looked to the Bolognese government as a model. Genoa was chosen because, from a study of political life in fifteenth-century Genoa on which I have been engaged, I was aware of some particularly interesting elements of popular government there. Furthermore, recent work on sixteenth-century Genoa by Italian scholars, notably that of Arturo Pacini, has made clear that the famous reform of the government of Genoa in 1528 was far from being the classic example of the institution of a closed oligarchy, a civic nobility, it has long been considered to be.⁶

This book deals with only some aspects of the complex problem of the advance of oligarchy and the related spread of aristocratic ideals, prejudices and habits, and the identification of political oligarchies and civic nobilities. The vexed question of shifts in the economic interests and strategies of civic elites, and their relation to wider economic changes in Italy, for example, is not tackled here. In focusing on certain aspects of the problem and not trying to encompass them all, it is hoped that at least those aspects under scrutiny can be seen more clearly, and in that way this study can contribute to our understanding of the whole.

The political lexicon of Renaissance Italy included several important, widely-used, words and concepts such as *signoria*, *popolo*, *stato*, *balia*, *reggimento*, that have no exact equivalent in English or convey nuances that a straightforward translation cannot capture. In some circumstances, for example, it is possible to translate '*il popolo*' as 'the people' in a context where the meaning would not be lost, but in others, such as when the term refers to the *popolo* as an institutional element of civic government, the English word cannot convey the

⁶ See below, pp. 204–5, 221.

full or exact significance. Consequently, while the attempt has been made to avoid using words unfamiliar to those who do not know Italian, and sprinkling the text with italicized words and phrases, it has sometimes been unavoidable, if important nuances and distinctions were not to be lost. A glossary is provided, to give definitions and explanations of the most-frequently used terms to help the non-specialist grasp these nuances.

In order to avoid the text of the comparative chapters in the second half of the book sinking under the weight of scholarly apparatus, only those sources that were found to be most useful for the matters dealt with in this book, and those from which quotations or references to primary sources have been taken, have been cited. Only works cited have been listed in the bibliography.

This book was largely researched and written while I was a Senior Research Fellow at Warwick University, with fellowships from the Humanities Research Board and the Arts and Humanities Research Board, in the Department of History, and then in the AHRB Centre for the Study of Renaissance Elites and Court Cultures. I am very grateful for the support I received there during my years at the university, in particular from Professor Julian Gardner, and above all from Professor Michael Mallett. I have worked with Michael Mallett on a succession of research projects over twenty years, and his combination of level-headed good sense, formidable industry and unflagging enthusiasm for historical research has made him a most congenial colleague and mentor. I am also grateful to Professor David Abulafia of the University of Cambridge (where I am now a Senior Research Associate at the Faculty of History), for recommending this book to Brill, to the anonymous reader of the manuscript for the publisher for encouraging me to clarify my arguments and conclusions, and to Marcella Mulder, associate editor of Brill, for her patience and efficiency.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

POPULAR GOVERNMENT IN SIENA

The days of glory of the republic of Siena were long gone by the middle of the fifteenth century. The confidence of the time when Sienese bankers had been among the wealthiest in Italy, and the citizens had begun to build what would have been one of the largest cathedrals in Europe, was fading even before the plagues and wars of the later fourteenth century shrank the population and undermined its prosperity.¹ Siena still had an extensive territory in southern Tuscany and the Maremma, but much of it was difficult hill country or malarial plain, and Siena itself was the only city of any importance in the state. There were few Sienese merchants of any significance outside the city, and few bankers with extensive connections elsewhere.² If it had not been for the major north-south route running through Siena and its territory, it would have been something of a backwater. As it was, Siena was in the second rank of Italian states, and was not a major player in the politics of the peninsula.

Siena's troubles in the later fourteenth century had been compounded by political turbulence. There had been a succession of regimes, each of which had brought new men into the government; each batch of new men and their descendants kept their collective

¹ The best general history of medieval Siena is *Banchieri e mercanti di Siena* (Siena, 1987), with contributions by Franco Cardini, Michele Cassandro, Giovanni Cherubini, Giuliano Pinto and Marco Tangheroni. The standard account of Sienese government in the first half of the fourteenth century is that by William M. Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune. Siena under the Nine, 1287-1355* (Berkeley, 1981); for the troubles that impoverished Siena in the second half of the fourteenth century, see William Caferro, *Mercenary Companies and the Decline of Siena* (Baltimore, 1998).

² For the economic importance to the Sienese of investment in land and the comparatively modest scale of their commercial ventures in the fifteenth century, see David L. Hicks, 'Sources of wealth in Renaissance Siena: Businessman and landowners', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 93 (1986), pp. 9-42; Giuliano Pinto, '"Honour" and "Profit": Landed property and trade in medieval Siena', in Trevor Dean and Chris Wickham (eds), *City and Countryside in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Essays Presented to Philip Jones* (London, 1990), pp. 81-91.

identity under subsequent regimes. By the end of the century there were five distinct groups, which came to be called “monti”: the Gentiluomini, Nove, Dodici, Riformatori and the Monte del Popolo.³ In the early fifteenth century, the Gentiluomini were partially and the Dodici wholly excluded from the government, after some of their members conspired with the Florentines.⁴ Despite their exclusion, the new regime instituted in 1403, which would endure until 1480, was one of most broadly-based governments in Italy.⁵

Leaving aside the Dodici and the Gentiluomini, this was still not a regime open to all men, even to all men of property, taxpayers long resident in the city, or citizens. Those eligible for political office, the ‘abilitati al reggimento’, broadly speaking, were the descendants of those who had served on the major executive body of the time under the various fourteenth century regimes. They were divided into monti according to the regime in which their ancestors had first held such office. Thus, the descendants of the men who had governed the city during the regime of the Nove from 1287 to 1355 formed the Monte dei Nove, the descendants of the men who had joined the government from 1368 to 1385 formed the Monte dei Riformatori, and those whose forefathers had first sat in the governing council during the subsequent regime were members of the Monte del Popolo. Newcomers whose family did not belong to any of the monti, but who were considered suitable to join the *reggimento*⁶ (such as men from prominent families in communities subject to Siena who had moved to the city) were assigned to the Monte del Popolo. These three monti—Nove, Riformatori and Popolo—formed

³ See Valerie Wainwright, ‘Conflict and popular government in fourteenth century Siena: il Monte dei Dodici, 1355–1368’, in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana tardo-comunale* (Florence, 1983), pp. 57–80; A. K. Isaacs, ‘Magnati, comune e stato a Siena nel Trecento e all’inizio del Quattrocento’, in *ibid.*, pp. 81–96; Elena Brizio, ‘L’elezione degli uffici politici nella Siena del Trecento’, *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 98 (1991), pp. 16–62; Daniele Marrara, ‘I magnati e il governo del Comune di Siena dallo Statuto del 1274 alla fine del XIV secolo’, in *Studi per Enrico Fiumi* (Pisa, 1979), pp. 239–76.

⁴ T. Terzani, ‘Siena dalla morte di Gian Galeazzo Visconti alla morte di Ladislao di Angiò Durazzo’, *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 67 (1960), pp. 3–84; Alessandra Carniani, *I Salimbeni, quasi una signoria. Tentativi di affermazione politica nella Siena del ’300* (Siena, 1995), pp. 211–83.

⁵ For the institutions of this government, see Mario Ascheri, *Siena nel Rinascimento: Istituzioni e sistema politica* (Siena, 1985), pp. 9–108.

⁶ See the glossary for an explanation of this term.

the government of Siena, with most political offices being divided equally between them.

Allocation of offices among the *monti* could be further complicated by another tripartite dimension to the structure of the government, the division of the city into the *terzi* ('thirds') of Città, Camollia and San Martino. Each board of the main executive committee, the *Concistoro*, for example, would have a prior from each of the three governing *monti* for each *terzo*, and three *gonfalonieri*, one from each *terzo*, from different *monti*, while the office of the Captain of the People would be rotated among the *terzi* and the *monti*. But the *terzi* were not politically significant. A man's *monte* rather than his neighbourhood was the primary focus of his political identity. It was membership of a *monte* that made him a member of the *reggimento*, qualifying him for government offices. In that entire *monti* could be excluded from political office, which *monte* a man belonged to could be of fundamental importance in determining his part in Sienese political life. But the *monti* were not the exclusive focus of political identity or loyalty. Significant political groupings, such as the supporters of an alliance with a particular state, usually included men from different *monti*.

Despite their importance in Sienese government and political life, the *monti* were curiously amorphous entities. They had no formal organization or structure, no officers. An individual might achieve a position of prominence that made him a leading figure within his *monte*, but he would not become a leader *of* the *monte*. The *monti* had no common property or meeting places, and were not associated with any particular churches or confraternities. They had no symbols, banners, colours or rallying cries, apart from their own name. Given the fact that most men would have been born into their *monti*, it is striking that they did not seem to have much sentimental attachment to them. It was primarily the association of membership of a *monte* with eligibility for or exclusion from political office that would make a man identify with his own. But at times there could also be recollections of the origins of the *monti*, echoes of the disputes that led to and accompanied the changes of regime that gave rise to them in the fourteenth century, giving some sense of collective identity to members of a particular *monte*, and influencing how they were regarded by others.

Appointments to most offices were made by sortition, the drawing of name-slips from electoral purses, a procedure associated with

popular government. Not all those whose names were drawn from the electoral purses would like the offices for which they had been chosen, however, or want to hold them. They might refuse to take them up, even if that meant incurring a fine. Sometimes men would be travelling away from the city when their names were drawn, or already be holding another, incompatible office. Regulations forbidding relatives to hold certain offices at the same time could also stand in the way of posts being filled by the usual procedure. The consequent need to hold elections, 'scrutinies', as they were called in Siena, to fill vacancies (and sometimes more than one scrutiny was needed before a suitable, available, potential incumbent was selected), provided opportunities for those who were anxious to hold office to lobby. The practice was frowned upon but difficult to control. Lobbying for election to the Concistoro when scrutinies were needed, particularly as the purses began to be emptied towards the end of an electoral cycle, gave rise to legislation in 1446. Because the least deserving were always the most importunate, ran the preamble to this law, so that often the less capable were being put forward for election to the Concistoro and more suitable candidates left out, the Council of the People agreed that in future the members of the Concistoro should nominate the candidates for election openly in the council. That way, everyone would try to nominate men truly qualified to sit in the principal magistracy of the city.⁷

Evidently, not all those technically eligible to hold the highest offices in this popular government were considered personally qualified to do so. There was still concern some years later, in 1451, that those holding office in the Concistoro might be 'less capable' and 'less intelligent' than was necessary to deal with some of the more delicate business of government.⁸ Considerable care was taken in the selection of those who would hold the more prestigious offices in the Concistoro: the Captain of the People, who acted as head of the government during his two-month term of office, his three council-

⁷ ASS, Concistoro 483, f. 20r-v.

⁸ In consequence, it was decided that the main police committee of nine elected annually to watch over the security of the reggimento (later known as the Nove di Guardia, the Nine of Ward, but at that time having no fixed title), should in future act alone and not with the Concistoro, as they had been doing. (ASS, Concistoro 2118, f. 21r.)

lors, who also held office for two months, and the three gonfalonieri, who held office for six months. Generally, a man would serve at least two or three terms as prior before his name would be placed in the purse for the gonfalonieri, and have served at least once as a gonfaloniere before being considered eligible to be Captain of the People.

Offices could also be assigned as a reward to men considered to have rendered special service to the republic. This had to be done sparingly, or it could cause resentment and discontent. The chance to hold office was valued by many, but often for the emoluments, the salary and fees and other perks, that came with it rather than for the opportunity to participate in government or to exercise power. Recognition of this lay behind attempts made in 1451 to discourage idleness and dissipation among younger men by legislation laying down that any citizen under fifty not engaged in some trade or profession or actively promoting work in Sienese territory could not hold any communal office.⁹ On the other hand, ensuring that those holding office, particularly in the territory, stayed at their post and fulfilled their duties could be a problem. In 1437 there were proposals that officials in the territory could normally only be given one period of leave during their term of office, and that no official should send a substitute to take his place without the permission of the Council of the People—which rejected both suggestions.¹⁰

Each board of the Concistoro, with nine priors, held office for only two months, and the electoral purses from which the successive boards were drawn were made up for seven years.¹¹ As each man could serve as a prior only once during an electoral cycle, over seven years at least 378 men would do so. Every man who had served a term as prior on the Concistoro became a ‘*riseduto*’, with the right to a seat for life in the Council of the People. In 1441,

⁹ Students at the university of Siena were exempted. ASS, Concistoro 2118, f. 22v.

¹⁰ ASS, Concistoro 2114, f. 100r-v.

¹¹ After the scrutiny in the Council of the People of all those considered eligible, *riseduti* and non-*riseduti*, to choose the men whose names would be placed in the electoral purses, the names were divided into groups of nine by scrutineers, and each group, together with the name of one of those who had been chosen in the scrutiny for the office of Captain of the People, was sealed in a wax ball, and placed in the electoral purses.

the Sienese reckoned the number of *riseduti* to be 405; by 1447, they were commenting proudly on how 'our *reggimento* has multiplied into a fine *popolo*', and there were over 460 *riseduti*.¹²

In a city with an estimated population of around 15,000, therefore, several hundred men would have the right to sit and vote in the main consultative and deliberative assembly of the republic. *Riseduti* enjoyed a special status within Sienese political life, as well as certain other privileges, such as not being subjected to torture by judicial officials without the permission of the Concistoro.¹³ They constituted the political elite of Siena—if one comprising about ten per cent of adult males. Wealth and education could bring a privileged position within that elite, but were not indispensable. Many *riseduti* would be tradesmen of quite modest means, but if they possessed political skills they might still become respected and influential members of the regime. To outsiders, Siena could appear to be a city run by men of lowly social status. A Portuguese resident, one Master Valesio, was denounced in January 1451 for insulting the government and deriding the citizens who were part of it, saying that the city was ruled by 'grocers, tanners, shoemakers and rustics', who constituted 'uno reggimento di merda' ('a shitty government').¹⁴

The Council of the People was the true heart of Sienese political life. If the councillors could in general only debate matters put before them by the Concistoro, the debates were genuine and proposals could be and were rejected. The Concistoro itself needed the authorization of the council for all important decisions. All the councillors had served at least one term themselves in the Concistoro: that was what had qualified them to be members of the Council of the People. Many of them would have served in the Concistoro several times. They had no cause to be overawed by the authority of the current board. All councillors also had the opportunity, at least twice a year, to voice any concerns they had about the current situation of the city and the government, or any aspect of its social or economic life, and to propose reforms. These opportunities came about because the Captain of the People holding office in January and

¹² ASS, Concistoro 450, f. 41v.; ASS, Concistoro 2116, f. 45v.

¹³ Ascheri, *Siena nel Rinascimento*, p. 92.

¹⁴ After the Concistoro had investigated these reports, he was told to leave Sienese territory within three days (ASS, Concistoro 507, ff. 20v–21r).

February or July and August was obliged to put before the council a 'proposta generale', asking for any comments and suggestions the councillors might wish to make. Often the debates following a proposta generale resulted in the appointment of a commission to draw up provisions based on the suggestions that had been made, which were then put before the Council for approval or rejection. Surviving texts of such provisions show the range of matters that councillors could raise, from the price of victuals to the administration of the university to the conduct of scrutinies and elections, to public order and the conduct of officials.¹⁵ Their intention, according to their preambles, was to promote the benefit of the government, the regime, the city and the territory, and to enhance the union of the citizens.

Attendance at the council would also have given the *riseduti* the opportunity to hear the opinions of their colleagues, and to judge their political qualities. Clearly, some men earned particular respect. By no means all *riseduti* would have served a turn on the numerous special commissions, *Balie*, or the *Consigli di Richiesta* (Councils of Request), elected or selected to assist the *Concistoro* on matters of particular difficulty or importance. Of the approximately 710 men who were members of the *Concistoro* at least once during the years 1430 to 1450, only about 215 (30 per cent) sat on even one of them.¹⁶ Around one in ten appear to have been appointed to such bodies with some regularity during part or all of this period. If those who sat most frequently and regularly are selected, 34 men can be identified as forming part of an informal 'inner circle' of the regime, those with the best knowledge of public affairs, those considered by their fellow citizens most fit to deal with them. Not all of these 34 men were active at the same time: some died during those two decades, and some were only becoming prominent towards the end of the period, so the inner circle at any time would have been still smaller. The majority had decades of experience of government and politics to draw on. Of the 34 men, 21 had first sat in the *Concistoro* in or before 1420, some in the earliest years of the regime at the

¹⁵ See Christine Shaw, 'Provisions following "Proposte generali" 1436 and 1456', in Mario Ascheri (ed.), *Siena e il suo territorio nel Rinascimento III* (Siena, 2000), pp. 109–52.

¹⁶ It should be borne in mind that the names of the members of some commissions are not known, and there are problems identifying some individuals.

beginning of the fifteenth century. Not all *monti* were equally represented—the inner circle included fourteen Noveschi, twelve Riformatori but only eight Popolari—which means that the Popolari who were elected to special commissions on several occasions were less likely than their Noveschi and Riformatori colleagues to become part of the inner circle of the *reggimento*.

This is probably a reflection of the social differences between the various *monti*. These were becoming less marked than among their ancestors in the fourteenth century, but they were still evident. Of the fourteen members of the old-established Noveschi families in the inner circle, whose ancestors had been part of the regime of prosperous merchants during the late thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries, two were lawyers, two were bankers and the rest were not identified by any particular trade or profession. Of the dozen Riformatori, two were bankers, one a lawyer, one dealt in furs (*pellicciaio*), one in woollen cloth (*lanaiolo*), one was a bell-founder (*campanarius*) and three were retailers (*ritaglieri*). The eight Popolari were not artisans: they included three men holding university doctorates (at least two of them lawyers), a notary, a retailer, a merchant and the grandson of a knight who would himself be knighted in 1451.¹⁷

These men were not part of a self-appointed clique, or a party or faction. The usual method of election of the special commissions and extraordinary councils ensured that they were appointed because they enjoyed the respect of their fellow *riseduti*. Generally, the Council of the People would authorize the Concistoro either to elect the commissions, or to nominate a specific number of *riseduti* from each *monte* for scrutiny in the Council of the People in order to elect a smaller group. Awareness that some men were turning up on the special bodies again and again did arouse some resentment, however. As it was virtuous for everyone to want to take part in dealing with the important affairs of the republic, it was declared in February 1447, a new body, the Savi del Concistoro, was to be set up so that nobody would have reason to complain that some rather than others were continually being summoned for such matters.¹⁸ The names of six men from each government *monte* were to be

¹⁷ Francesco Aringhieri.

¹⁸ ASS, Concistoro 450, f. 32v.

drawn by each incoming Concistoro from a special electoral purse: these eighteen men had to be summoned by the Concistoro before they brought together any Consiglio di Richiesta. The office of the Savi ('wise men') continued until 1458 but in practice they did not increase significantly the number of citizens called upon to consult on important matters: the established pattern of appointment to the special commissions was not disturbed.

The Sienese set great store by unity and concord, especially among the members of the *reggimento*. It was not something they ever took for granted, and at times they felt that special measures were needed if it was to be preserved or, if it had been disturbed, restored. No one was so ignorant that he could fail to know how dangerous it was to create new parties in the city, a provision passed by the Council of the People in 1429 declared, so in future no one was to pronounce any party names, especially those 'two abominable names recently introduced' at the instigation of the devil. (This prohibition was not to apply to 'the names of the monti under which the offices and honours of our city are divided'.)¹⁹ The abominable new names were not specified, and it is not clear if they were the same as the 'stupid names', Chiassa and Grassio (or Graffio), banned in 1439 because they signified 'partisanship and division': any citizen proved guilty of using these labels had to stay away from the Palace of the Signoria where the governing councils and committees sat for a year. Before elections, citizens were to take an oath that they would vote only according to their conscience and not under the sway of lobbying or of any partisan groups.²⁰ On both occasions, all *riseduti* were to take a solemn oath on a missal, held by a Prior of the Concistoro (in 1439) or the Captain of the People (in 1429), to forgive and forget any quarrels and rancours between members of the *reggimento* concerning public affairs. Divine sanction of these oaths was reinforced in 1429 by the *riseduti* present at the ceremony hearing a mass of the Holy Spirit sung beforehand, and giving the officiating priest a 'kiss of holy peace'.²¹

The *reggimento* was in any case held to be associated with the divinity in a special way, because it was maintained that it had been

¹⁹ ASS, Concistoro 377, f. 28r.

²⁰ ASS, Concistoro 441, f. 26r-v.

²¹ ASS, Concistoro 377, ff. 27v-28r; Concistoro 441, f. 23v.

patterned on the Holy Trinity.²² Members of the *reggimento* could think of the *monti* of the Nove, Riformatori and Popolo as being distinct but united in the government of the city. They did not have to conceive of their government as a coalition of factions, despite the fact that government offices were divided equally among three *monti*. It was also, explicitly, a *reggimento popolare*. The mere suggestion that some Gentiluomini might be admitted to the Concistoro could be considered ‘insulting and an outrage to the entire present popular government (*popularis regiminis*)’, and bring down on the proposer, Jacobo Marzi, perpetual exclusion from all offices and from the Council of the People, and the loss of his status as a *riseduto* in January 1451.²³ Although the Gentiluomini were excluded from the Concistoro and the Council of the People, they were in fact admitted to other important bodies. The main financial board, the Four of the Biccherna, for example, had four members because it always included one from the Monte dei Gentiluomini with men from the three governing *monti*. Gentiluomini could also hold offices in the territory subject to Siena. A third of the 300 seats in the General Council, which had its origins in the thirteenth century when the ancestors of the Gentiluomini had dominated Siena, were also allocated to them.

In theory, the authority of all government committees and commissions, including the Concistoro, was delegated from the General Council as well as from the Council of the People. It was the heavy volumes of the deliberations of the General Council that were the authoritative records of legislation, and their carefully written pages contrast with the much smaller, flimsier volumes of a few dozen pages compiled for each of the boards of the Concistoro, which included the records of the proceedings of the Council of the People. In practice, the General Council counted for little politically and was treated by the Council of the People as though it were subordinate. No attempt was made by members of the General Council to claim for themselves greater authority, nor did the Gentiluomini try to use it as a means of obtaining a greater share in the government. Only non-*riseduti* were elected, by the Concistoro, to the General Council; membership in it had become a first stage in a Sienese political

²² For example, ASS, Concistoro 441, f. 26r.

²³ ASS, Concistoro 509, f. 7r-v.

career. Hence, there was concern in 1447 that men were being elected to the General Council who were not members of the *reggimento*, 'taking the place of sons of established [*antichi*] and worthy citizens to the great shame of our *reggimento*'.²⁴

Unlike the Gentiluomini, the Dodici (who were *popolari*) had been completely excluded from the government in 1403. Socially, they included some of the most prominent men of Siena, including several of the richest citizens, such as Marco Benci and the bankers Pietro Turamini and his brothers,²⁵ and the eminent lawyer Mariano Sozzini.²⁶ Politically, they were pariahs, regarded with greater distrust than were the Gentiluomini. Some security measures were directed against the Dodici alone, like the search of their houses for concealed weapons ordered in April 1436, or the enquiry in July 1441 into whether any Dodicino had committed any offence during the night over the past two months.²⁷ Both the Dodici and the Gentiluomini were liable to come under suspicion of being ready to plot to try to change the government, to exploit times of difficulty or vulnerability. If there was an epidemic, if the Emperor on a journey through Italy was to visit Siena (the association of the Dodici with Emperor Charles IV had not been forgotten),²⁸ if there was war in Tuscany, dozens of Dodici and Gentiluomini could be exiled to the territory as potential threats to the regime. No evidence was required of any actual plot; sending them out of the city would be a purely precautionary measure.²⁹

It is likely that it was the Dodici and the Gentiluomini who were to be the objects of surveillance by a new office set up in 1444 with

²⁴ ASS, Concistoro 2116, f. 41r.

²⁵ Giuliano Catoni and Gabriella Piccinni, 'Alliramento e ceto dirigente nella Siena del Quattrocento', in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Impruneta, 1987), pp. 460–1.

²⁶ For Sozzini, see Paolo Nardi, *Mariano Sozzini, giureconsulto senese del Quattrocento* (Milano, 1974).

²⁷ ASS, Concistoro 421, f. 38r; Concistoro 453, f. 2r.

²⁸ Charles IV, passing through Siena on his way to be crowned in Rome, had supported the revolt against the government of the Nove in 1355 that led to the establishment of the new regime of the Dodici; and in 1369, on his return from another visit to Rome, had backed an unsuccessful attempt by the Dodici and the powerful noble clan of the Salimbeni to overthrow the new regime of the Riformatori. (Pietro Rossi, 'Carlo IV di Lussemburgo e la Repubblica di Siena (1355–1369)', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, n.s. 1 (1930), pp. 4–39, 178–242.)

²⁹ Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 76–7.

nine men (three from each of the three governing monti) appointed for a year at a time 'to keep a watch on those who are not members of the *reggimento*'.³⁰ This was the precursor of the Nine of Ward, which soon became a permanent part of the government, responsible for watching over the safety of the regime and public order in general. Those who were members of the *reggimento* as well as those excluded from it became their concern. Sienese government in the mid-fifteenth century may outwardly have seemed to be peaceful and stable, but there were Sienese who wanted to change it. And the real threat to the *popolare* regime would come not from the Gentiluomini and the Dodici, but from within the *reggimento*.

³⁰ ASS, Concistoro 2115, f. 100r-v.

CHAPTER TWO

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

The challenge to popular government from the conspiracy that came to a head in 1456 may have been long anticipated, but still it came as a profound shock to many Siennese. After this, political life in Siena was never the same again. It was such a blow because it was led by men at the heart of the regime, men who were prepared to jeopardize the independence of the Siennese republic in order to accomplish their ends. They hoped to use the support of the ambitious Aragonese king of Naples, Alfonso, and of the commander of the most powerful company of mercenaries in Italy, the *condottiere* Jacopo Piccinino, even though this meant bringing war to Siennese territory. Ironically, the measures taken to thwart the conspirators and to protect popular government in Siena involved significant changes in its structure. Most notably, they involved the appointment of a new, more powerful kind of extraordinary commission, a *Balia* that met separately from the Concistoro. These *Balie* were the forerunners of those of the 1480s and 1490s, that would be the main instrument for the establishment of oligarchical government in Siena by the end of the century.

What precisely the conspirators wanted to achieve by their plotting—apart from making themselves the dominant figures in Siennese political life—is not known. Most of the evidence about the conspiracy comes from the official records of the accusations against them and the summaries of investigations and interrogations, and these are more concerned with what they planned to do rather than why. Were they acting under the spur of ideas or ideals, or of ambition, of sheer desire for power? The sixteenth-century Siennese historian, Orlando Malavolti, offered what sounds like a generic list of reasons why people take part in such conspiracies, rather than a description of the motives of this particular group of conspirators. Many, discontented with the existing government, wanted to change it, he wrote, others hoped that a change of government would provide them with opportunities to rid themselves of debts, while others were driven by private grudges or enmities, or hoped to escape

punishment for crimes.¹ They have been seen as influenced by ideas about the desirability of government by an educated elite, ideas derived from a humanist education.² The group did include some learned men—one of the most distinguished Sieneſe ſcholars of the day, Francesco Patrizi, was implicated in their plots—but their plans were to be put into effect by force, not persuasion. They were ready to use threats and violence in the council chambers as well as in the ſtreets, quite apart from their association with Alfonso and Piccinino. Whatever ideas they may have derived from their ſtudy of claſſical texts, they made no attempt to put them acroſs by reaſoned debate, by bringing about reforms through legitimate means.

Identifying the aims and motives of the conſpirators are not the only problems in understanding this ſignificant episode: identifying all the conſpirators and thoſe who helped, ſupported and ſympathized with them is another one. The main ſource for the identification of the conſpirators is the liſts of thoſe proſecuted and named in the investigations that took place in 1456–8, and it is not certain that the names of all the participants found their way into the record. Eſta bliſhing who ſupported and ſympathized with them is very difficult; it is not really poſſible to go beyond conjecture and ſuppoſition.

One valuable baſis for conjecture is provided by a liſt of 143 men who ſigned a document which can be dated to about 1450, attesting that they had ſworn to uphold a pact.³ All of the leading conſpirators were among thoſe who took this oath. What they ſwore to uphold, however, was ſomewhat vague and hardly controversial. Conſidering that the affairs of Italy and eſpecially of Tuſcany were fraught with dangers, the text of the oath ran, it was neceſſary to provide for the welfare of the government and the republic ‘and eſpecially to preſerve all three monti, that is, Nove, Popolo and Riformatori’. ‘The citizens of the regime’ needed to prevent any harm to the *reggimento*, the city or the republic, to increaſe the city’s

¹ Orlando Malavolti, *Dell’Historia di Siena* (Bologna, 1982; reprint of 1599 edn.), Book III, f. 56r.

² Petra Pertici (ed.), *Tra politica e cultura nel primo Quattrocento senese: Le epistole di Andreuccio Petrucci (1426–1443)* (Siena, 1990).

³ Published by Petra Pertici, in ‘Una “coniuratio” del reggimento di Siena nel 1450’, *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 99 (1992), pp. 28–47.

territory and to achieve a secure and permanent peace. What Sienese citizen—of the three government monti—would have dissented from these unexceptionable sentiments? The oath was to preserve the government, not to change it. It contravened the prohibitions on forming sects and associations to influence policy, but those taking it did not pledge themselves to secrecy.⁴

All the major figures among those prosecuted in 1456–8 for conspiracy against the regime took this oath; a fifth (21 per cent) of all those who took it would be executed or exiled for their alleged part in the plots. Those who were prosecuted but did not take the oath were either close relatives of the major figures or were small fry. But it cannot be assumed that all the men who took the oath in 1450 knew the aims of the conspirators, let alone shared them. How many took the oath regarding it as some kind of patriotic pledge? Perhaps the conspirators used it to attract men who they hoped to manipulate into supporting them in the councils to carry out their private agenda. If so, they had recruited a useful number of men from all three governing monti, the majority of them already members of the Council of the People.⁵

According to Sigismondo Tizio, writing in the early sixteenth century, the intention of the organizers of the oath was to favour Alfonso and to oppose the Florentines.⁶ If this was so, it would indicate another link between the oath and the conspiracy of the mid-1450s. Contemporaries perceived a continuity of purpose between a group of men who favoured an alliance with Alfonso in the late 1440s and the conspirators. From Aragonese sources, Alfonso's main contacts in Siena in the 1440s appear to have been Ghino Bellanti, Antonio Petrucci and Pietro Micheli.⁷ Two of them took the oath (Pietro Micheli was dead by 1450); and Ghino Bellanti and Antonio Petrucci

⁴ Sigismondo Tizio, *Historiae Senenses*, Vol. III, ed. Petra Pertici, (Rome, 1998), p. 274.

⁵ About a sixth (23) of those who subscribed the document were men whose careers in the Concistoro and hence in the Council of the People only began about 1450 or later, but only seven men would never hold office in the Concistoro at all. At least 55 were Noveschi, 35 Popolari and 45 Riformatori.

⁶ Tizio, *Historiae Senenses*, p. 272.

⁷ A.F.C. Ryder, 'La politica italiana di Alfonso d'Aragona (1442–1458)', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, 78 (1959), pp. 268, 278–9. 'Pietro Alfagen', also mentioned by Ryder as one of Alfonso's contacts in Siena, was not a Sienese citizen; as he was writing to Alfonso in Catalan, he may have been an agent of the king.

were considered the most dangerous of the conspirators. Pietro Micheli was a lawyer, a doctor in canon and civil law, and had been knighted;⁸ he is known to have accepted money from Alfonso in 1448 to fortify a stronghold he had near Siena.⁹ He died in February 1449, but his brother Guasparre and son Antonio were both involved in the plots of the 1450s and both took the oath. Antonio, who described himself as 'count and knight', was the second man to subscribe the oath, which he noted that he took 'considering the condition of Italy and the need of our city', and in the hope that it would promote the preservation of Siena and its liberty.¹⁰

Ghino Bellanti was one of the last to subscribe the oath, and used only the formula adopted by most of those who took it—that what was set out in the preamble was just and right for the salvation of the city and the *reggimento*.¹¹ So closely identified was he with Alfonso that rumours that the king intended to come to Siena in 1453 were considered unfounded, provided that Ghino and Antonio Petrucci 'don't sell Siena to him'.¹² Of all the conspirators, Ghino seems to have come under the greatest suspicion by the mid-1450s. The last special commission to which he was elected was a Balìa in November 1453; the last time he sat in the Concistoro was August 1445. This was not likely to have been a voluntary withdrawal from government office. In August 1452 he and Antonio Petrucci were described as wanting to settle the affairs of Siena as they chose, by force or goodwill, 'with the following that they have among the *popolo minuto*'.¹³ Cultivating the support of the *popolo minuto* to help establish personal dominance in a city looks like the prelude to a *signoria*. Is it possible that either Ghino Bellanti or Antonio Petrucci saw himself as a potential lord of Siena, ruling over the city with the backing of Alfonso? There is no direct evidence in the form of a statement or letter, or indirect evidence in reports of what others believed their intentions were, to support such a hypothesis. But it was a role that

⁸ For an outline of his career, see Pertici, *Tra politica e cultura*, p. 59.

⁹ Ryder, 'La politica italiana', 78 (1959), p. 279.

¹⁰ Pertici, 'Una "coniuratio" del reggimento', p. 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 266: Boccacino and Nicodemo da Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza, 19 Oct. 1453, Florence.

¹³ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 255: Sceva da Curte to Francesco Sforza, 7 Aug. 1452, Siena.

Antonio Petrucci for one might well have relished and for which his career sometimes seemed to be a preparation.¹⁴

The period of his greatest influence came early in his career, when he was prominent in organizing the defence of Lucca against Florence in 1430, and was instrumental in the overthrow of the *signore* of Lucca, Paolo Guinigi.¹⁵ His exploits during this war decided him 'to follow the profession of arms, and to do it in such a way that I will gain a reputation', and fired, or confirmed, his ambition. 'After having been willingly involved in important matters, it seems hard to me now to return to governing my little household, and it would also seem to me to be very shameful'.¹⁶ His choice of the profession of arms was an unusual one for a member of the Sienese political elite in the fifteenth century. His choice of women from the disgraced noble Salimbeni family as his second wife and as the wife of his son Bartolomeo in 1437–8, associated him with a tradition of aspiration to political dominance based on military power, on the cultivation of a personal following in Siena, and the help of other powers.¹⁷ About the time of his marriage to Marietta Salimbeni, he bought extensive lands in the Val d'Orcia; the former Salimbeni fortress of Perignano in that valley became his main residence.¹⁸

He enjoyed much favour among the people in Siena. Unusually, he became Captain of the People, for January and February 1431, when he was aged only thirty and before he was a *riseduto*.¹⁹ While he only sat in the Concistoro for two other terms,²⁰ he was frequently appointed to *ad hoc* commissions, especially those dealing

¹⁴ For an account of his career, see Pertici, *Tra politica e cultura*, pp. 167–77, although she is arguably inclined to overestimate his importance and his reputation outside Siena.

¹⁵ G. Pardi, 'Notizie e documenti sulle relazioni tra Lucca e Siena', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 5 (1898), pp. 375–81; M.E. Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494: The Reconstruction of an Italian City-Republic* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 20–1.

¹⁶ Pertici, *Tra politica e cultura*, pp. 168, 170.

¹⁷ For the power of the Salimbeni family, and the tradition they represented, see Carniani, *I Salimbeni*; and for the Sienese campaigns against Cocco Salimbeni that led to the destruction of that power in 1418, see Arnaldo Vendiani-Bandi, *I castelli della Val d'Orcia e la Repubblica di Siena* (Siena, 1926; reprinted 1992), pp. 92–101.

¹⁸ Pertici, *Tra politica e cultura*, p. 171.

¹⁹ He was elected to replace a man who was disqualified because he had already held the office recently.

²⁰ As Captain of the People for January and February 1444 and as a gonfaloniere in July to December 1451.

with external relations, and was chosen on several occasions to direct security or military operations in Sieneſe territory. If his military predilections made him an obvious candidate for ſuch tasks, his predilection for diſobeying orders if he did not agree with them could make him troublesome to the Sieneſe government and earned him a meaſure of diſtrult from ſome other Sieneſe politicians and two ſentences of condemnation as a rebel.

When Alſonſo was in Tuſcany engaged in campaigning againſt Florence in 1447–8, Antonio Petrucci openly aſſociated himſelf with the king. He acted as one of Alſonſo’s envoys in January 1448 on an embaſſy to try to convince the Sieneſe that they could not afford to ſtay neutral in the conflict between Alſonſo and Florence.²¹ What cauſed more concern in Siena was that he undermined the embaſſies the Sieneſe ſent to the king by conducting ſeparate, unauthorized negotiations with him, taking a line oppoſed to that agreed by the Sieneſe councils. In December 1447 two ambaaſadors, Giovanni di Guccio Bichi and Criſtoſano Gabrielli, were ſent to Alſonſo to warn him not to liſten to ambitious citizens who made promiſes on behalf of Siena without any commiſſion from the government. Infuriated, Antonio Petrucci came to Siena and ſought revenge by publicly inſulting Giovanni Bichi, one of the richeſt and moſt prominent citizens, ſtriking him in the face in the ſtreet. He eſcaped puniſhment for this arrogance, partly becauſe thoſe he wanted to attack urged that he be pardoned, to avoid further trouble.²²

In Auguſt 1452 he was with the Neapolitan troops who had been brought to Tuſcany by Alſonſo’s ſon, Ferrante, Duke of Calabria,²³ and came to Siena as one of Calabria’s envoys to aſk for ſupplies. Antonio was not excluſively dedicated to the ſervice of the king, however. After being under ſome obligation to Alſonſo, perhaps a *condotta*, which expired in October 1454, he obtained ſomething from Pope Calixtus, but this only laſted until the end of October 1455. He proffered his ſervices ſeveral times in the 1450s to Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, but to no avail, and in 1452 claimed that

²¹ ASS, Concistoro 492, f. 13r–v.

²² Giugurta Tommaſi, *Dell’Historie di Siena. Deca ſeconda*, ed. Mario De Gregorio, II (Siena, 2004), pp. 3–19. Tommaſi is the beſt-informed and moſt judicious of the ſixteenth-century Sieneſe hiſtorians.

²³ ASMi, ASforzeſco, b. 255, Sceva da Curte to Francesco Sforza, 21 July 1452, Siena.

the Florentines had promised him 500 ducats a year.²⁴ The problem for Antonio was that his reputation outside Siena did not match his own estimation of the attraction of his services. He was considered a potential nuisance, at times a potential danger, to the regime and security of Siena. He was someone who needed to be watched and, if possible, neutralized. But he does not seem to have been regarded, even by Alfonso, as a serious interlocutor, or trustworthy enough for another power to back him if he aspired to the *signoria* of Siena.

The many letters he wrote, frequently in his own hand, reveal a literate, intelligent man, but one who was an extravagant fantasist rather than an astute politician. He did not have sufficient wealth or the fighting men at his command to enable him to enforce personal dominance over Siena, nor did he spend enough time in Siena to build up the kind of position and influence within the government that Pandolfo Petrucci would achieve at the end of the century. There are some indications that he may have become somewhat detached from the other conspirators in Siena, as he pursued his own agenda seeking military glory and marks of recognition from other powers. According to his subscription to the oath of 1450, he hoped that this would bring him 'reward from God and praise and commendation from all our *reggimento* and *popolo*.'²⁵ But when the oath became generally known in Siena, it aroused disapproval instead.

In October 1453 Antonio Petrucci, Ghino Bellanti and his son Pietro met Filippo del Ballata, Pietro Scacco Tancredi, Antonio Gori and Goro Loli in the church of San Desiderio and devised a plan, which was to involve many other citizens, to block in the councils decisions they disliked, and to accuse their opponents of conspiracy in order to have them expelled from the *reggimento*. Later, they and others signed a document to confirm their resolution.²⁶ The attack by Antonio Petrucci on Giovanni Bichi was only one of the physical

²⁴ *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli I: 1444-2 luglio 1458* (Fonti per la storia di Napoli aragonese, I, 1997) p. 123; ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 255: Sceva da Curte to Francesco Sforza, 27 Feb. 1452, Siena; Antonio, 'miles senensis' to Francesco Sforza, 1 Mar. 1451(2), Siena; Antonio Petrucci to F. Sforza, 19 Mar. 1454(5), Sorano; b. 256: A. Petrucci to F. Sforza, 17 Oct. 1455, Perignano; b.267: Nicodemo da Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza, 7 Nov. 1456, Florence.

²⁵ Pertici, 'Una "coniuratio" del reggimento', pp. 28-9.

²⁶ ASS, Balia 2, f. 206r.

assaults on their opponents made by the conspirators and their allies. Armed gangs roamed the streets in 1453, firing on the houses of their enemies and mocking and insulting them.²⁷ The conspirators also brought an atmosphere of menace into the council hall. During debates in July 1452 about whether to give supplies to the Duke of Calabria, they brought weapons under their cloaks into the council chamber, and fighting nearly broke out. Later that year, when controversy over the Neapolitan campaign against Florence flared again, and Maurizio Luti reproved Ghino Bellanti in council for all the trouble he was causing and had caused over the years, Pietro Bellanti drew his sword against him. It was this kind of behaviour that prompted legislation against intimidation in the councils, as the conspirators were finally being brought to book in August 1456.²⁸

The sense of unease in Siena was also due to military threats. First there were the Neapolitan campaigns against Florence: although the Sienese tried hard to avoid becoming involved, they did provoke hostilities between Florence and Siena. Barely had the Peace of Lodi in 1454 brought hope of more tranquil times when a conflict began with neighbouring barons, Everso d'Anguillara and Aldobrandino Orsini di Pitigliano. Then in 1455, there came the still more serious threat from the *condottiere* Jacopo Piccinino who took Orbetello, one of the largest of Siena's subject towns, in September of that year. While not directly responsible for provoking any of these conflicts, at least some of the conspirators were willing to encourage and exploit them.

It was at this stage that Antonio Petrucci's aims may have begun to diverge significantly from those of the other leading conspirators. He was elected commissioner for an assault on Aldobrandino Orsini's lands in July 1454,²⁹ although because he was not really trusted a series of other commissioners were elected to share this responsibility. One of them was Cristofano Gabrielli, whose report giving grounds for suspecting some collusion of Antonio Petrucci with Aldobrandino Orsini caused the Council of the People to order a commission of enquiry. A few days later, the Council decided that

²⁷ Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 67.

²⁸ Shaw, 'Provisions following "Proposte generali"', p. 126.

²⁹ For this war, see Luciano Banchi, 'La guerra de' Senesi col conte di Pitigliano (1454-55)', *Archivio storico italiano*, 4th ser., 3 (1879), pp. 184-97.

Antonio Petrucci, whose name had been drawn to be the next Captain of the People, should not take up that office.³⁰ Antonio protested that he desperately wanted victory, in the interests of the republic and because it would be greatly to his own honour.³¹ Perhaps he had only been indulging in some unauthorized negotiations with the enemy, as he had done before and as he would do again, when he was appointed commissioner for the campaign against Jacopo Piccinino.³² On several occasions Petrucci expressed concern for the effects on Siena of Piccinino's campaign. Siena needed peace and concord, he said, especially in the light of Alfonso's behaviour.³³

Ghino Bellanti, however, did not scruple to take advantage of the problems caused by the wars, or indeed to foster them, in the hope of producing favourable conditions for the conspirators to further their aims. As Jacopo Piccinino approached Siennese territory in June, Ghino Bellanti wrote to the castellan of the border fortress of Cetona, Giovanni Saragiola (one of the men who had taken the oath in 1450), inciting him to surrender it to Piccinino, which he did. The following spring Bellanti was involved in a plot in which one of his clients was to have betrayed another fortress, Rocca Tederighi, to the enemy but this was discovered before it could be put into effect. After peace was made between Siena and Piccinino, Ghino Bellanti urged him not to leave Siennese territory.³⁴

If the identity of the main conspirators and their covert contacts with Alfonso and the Duke of Calabria were known, and their contacts with Jacopo Piccinino at least suspected,³⁵ why was there no concerted effort to root out the conspiracy before August 1456? Was there too little secure evidence on which to base a prosecution, particularly against some of the most prominent individuals in Siena? An effort to thwart them may have been made in 1455, if sixteenth-century historians were correct in saying that a Balìa elected in July

³⁰ ASS, Concistoro 529, ff. 49r-v, 56v.

³¹ Pertici, *Tra politica e cultura*, p. 174.

³² ASS, Balìa 1, ff. 12r-13v; Balìa 396, f. 67r-v.

³³ ASS, Balìa 489, 42: Antonio Petrucci, 17 Nov. 1455, Monte Pescali.

³⁴ ASS, Balìa 397, ff. 182r-183v; Balìa 2, ff. 206v-207r; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 93, 111-2, 118-9; Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, Book III, ff. 52r, 53v. For Piccinino's campaign, see Luciano Banchi, 'Il Piccinino nello stato di Siena e la lega italica (1455-1456)', *Archivio storico italiano*, 4th ser., 4 (1879), pp. 44-58, 225-45.

³⁵ ASS, Concistoro 537, f. 11r-v.

1455, which was to meet and to make decisions on its own—and not, as Balie usually did, with the Concistoro—was given these extraordinary powers in order to exclude the conspirators.³⁶ In fact, one of the conspirators, Antonio Gori, sat on this Balia, although his participation in the plots did not come to light until February 1457. Its appointment was connected with the arrival of Jacopo Piccinino and his company of soldiers in Sienese territory in June, and the discovery in May that one of Siena's captains, Giberto da Correggio, was in correspondence, not to say collusion, with Piccinino.³⁷ It was this Balia that organized the assassination of Giberto when he came to Siena on 6 September, sending an honourable deputation to invite him to come to see them in the Palace, where he was murdered and thrown from the window.³⁸ An inscription recording this scratched into the wall of the room where the Balia met can still be seen.

The conspirators had been hanging fire for several years, manoeuvring, threatening, undermining the workings of the Sienese government, but had made no real move to establish their dominance over it. They seem to have believed that they needed external military support if they were to achieve their ambitions. If they had hoped to exploit the presence of Neapolitan troops in Tuscany, their plans would have been hindered by the lack of success of Alfonso and Ferrante in their Tuscan campaigns. For his part, Alfonso showed no intention of trying to conquer Siena. What he wanted was influence over the city and access to its resources, which was probably what he was promised by the conspirators. But Siena's system of popular government prevented them from establishing control over the councils, however much they threatened, lobbied or tried to manipulate elections, and they failed to win the argument in public debates. Although Jacopo Piccinino did not come to Tuscany to instal the conspirators as the rulers of Siena, they were ready to help him occupy parts of Sienese territory. Many people in Siena and elsewhere suspected that Piccinino was a stalking-horse for Alfonso, espe-

³⁶ Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 99; Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, III, f. 51r.

³⁷ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 255: Lodovico Petroni to Francesco Sforza, 15, 16 May 1455, Siena.

³⁸ ASS, Balia 1, ff. 63v–65v; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 104–5; G. Pardi, 'Il processo postumo di Giberto da Correggio', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 8 (1901), pp. 274–309.

cially when Alfonso provided him with support and encouragement after he was defeated by the troops of Francesco Sforza and Pope Calixtus, who were not prepared to leave Piccinino to establish himself in Tuscany.³⁹

When the conspirators' plot to betray Rocca Tederighi to Piccinino was discovered in March 1456, only one of them, Pietro Scacco Tancredi, was punished. He was only excluded from holding any political office or going to the Council for three years, and then barred from addressing the council from the rostrum (*aringhiero*) for a further eight years.⁴⁰ Conclusion of a peace between Siena and Piccinino in Naples at the end of May 1456 was a more serious setback for them.⁴¹ It had been agreed that Piccinino and his men should go to the kingdom of Naples, but he lingered on in Tuscany. The conspirators sent an envoy, Antonio di Casino Casucci, to ask Alfonso to intercede for Pietro Scacco Tancredi, and to try to rouse his anger against the Sienese. According to Tommasi, Ghino Bellanti arranged for the conspirators, who now numbered about forty, to sign a letter to Piccinino in an attempt to bind him to their aid with a kind of contract.⁴² He sent to Piccinino to ask him not to leave Orbetello before the end of August, when the term of office as Captain of the People of their most determined opponent, Cristofano Gabrielli, would be completed, and to approach Siena if they should need his help.⁴³

For his part, Cristofano Gabrielli used his position as Captain of the People to promote reforms that were intended to curb the conspirators. One of the last plots they discussed was to murder the members of a commission elected in July to draw up these reforms.⁴⁴ This commission also procured the dismissal of one of them, Mariano

³⁹ Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily 1396–1458* (Oxford, 1990), p. 410.

⁴⁰ ASS, Concistoro 537, f. 11r–v.

⁴¹ For the prolonged negotiations leading to the peace, and its terms, see L. Fumi, 'Francesco Sforza contro Jacopo Piccinino (dalla Pace di Lodi alla morte di Calisto III)', *Bollettino della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*, 16 (1910), pp. 568–86.

⁴² Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 118.

⁴³ ASS, Balìa 2, f. 12v.

⁴⁴ The nine members of the commission included some prominent opponents of the conspirators, Francesco Aringhieri, Pietro Biringucci and Giovanni di Guccio Bichi, and other eminent citizens, such as the famous doctor Maestro Bartolo di Tura, Agostino Borghesi and Giovanni Martinozzi.

Bargagli, from his prestigious position as *operaio* (master of the works) of the cathedral at the beginning of August.⁴⁵ Among the proposals approved by the Council of the People were a ban on any citizen taking a pension or gifts from another power; measures against intimidation of speakers in the councils; the appointment of conservators of the peace to prevent disorder in the city; and provisions to encourage the denunciation of conspiracies. The preamble to this last provision stressed how dangerous and pernicious sects and sworn associations were, how they subverted and brought to ruin governments and regimes ('ogni stato et reggimento'). 'And seeing how active such sects and divisions have been in your city and regime, especially for some time now, and the shame and danger into which they have brought your city and regime', how every effort of those who had tried to remedy this had been in vain, and seeing that the 'sects and conspiracies' could not be influenced by reason or persuasion or experience, but persisted in their malign intent, the provisions to encourage revelations of such plots and to punish those involved in them were proposed in order to rid the city of them and 'to bring all together in unity and concord'.⁴⁶ On 20 August a further batch of provisions were approved by the Council, including prohibitions of lobbying during scrutinies, and of revealing government secrets to ambassadors or visiting dignitaries; and a provision that any recommendation made by other powers on behalf of any citizen who was being prosecuted would automatically double the penalty to be imposed on the culprit.

On 9 August, the day after the first batch of provisions were approved, the Concistoro ordered Antonio Casucci to appear before them within fifteen days to explain what he had been negotiating outside Sienese territory which could disturb the peace of the city and generate discord among the citizens.⁴⁷ Casucci hesitated and consulted some of his fellow conspirators before deciding to present himself before the Concistoro on 23 August. His trust in his own astuteness, and in his ability to withstand interrogation and to stick to the story he had agreed with his friends, proved unfounded. Under

⁴⁵ ASS, Balìa 2, f. 13r.

⁴⁶ ASS, Concistoro 2118, ff. 95r-96v, 108r-119v; Concistoro 539, f. 40r-v; Shaw, 'Provisions following "Proposte generali"', pp. 125-52: quotation, p. 127.

⁴⁷ ASS, Concistoro 539, f. 42r-v.

the threat of torture, he soon made a lengthy confession. Further arrests followed, of Tommaso Niccolucci, Pietro Scacco Tancredi and Pietro Bellanti, who confirmed what Casucci had said. Pietro Bellanti escaped from imprisonment, and returned to the palace on the night of 24 August with a small band of followers, intending to kill Cristofano Gabrielli and some other members of the Concistoro and to seize the banner of the Popolo, with which he hoped to rouse the people. Failing to gain entrance to the palace, he withdrew, and fled from the city.⁴⁸

Those who remained in detention were examined in the presence of the Concistoro and the reform commission of nine. Although he was elderly, Pietro Scacco Tancredi went resolutely to the torture to which he was subjected, but at length asked to be untied, and proceeded to make a full confession of plots dating back to the period when King Alfonso had been in Tuscany in 1447–8. He was asked to concentrate on the most recent ones, those involving Jacopo Piccinino. What he revealed formed the basis of the account Cristofano Gabrielli gave to the Council of the People the next day, 30 August.

The councillors heard the revelations with consternation. The atmosphere in Siena had been troubled and tense for years. Many Sienese had felt that something was amiss, without being able to find an adequate explanation of what was wrong, and there had been open and bitter divisions, ugly quarrels in the streets and in the council chamber between leading citizens. The Sienese could not remember there ever being such dissension and ill-feeling in the city before, the Milanese ambassador had reported in February 1456.⁴⁹ Suspicions had deepened since then, with the earlier interrogation of Pietro Tancredi and the frequent gatherings of the conspirators. Complaints about his using his official residence for such meetings was one of the reasons why Mariano Bargagli was removed from his post as master of the works of the cathedral on 1 August.⁵⁰ But the realization of the full extent of the conspiracy shocked and horrified many Sienese. The sense that the popular government and

⁴⁸ For the course of the unmasking of the conspirators and their subsequent prosecutions, see Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 55r–58r; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 117–35; Tizio, *Historiae Senenses* (ed. Pertici), pp. 421–37.

⁴⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 256: Nicodemo da Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza, 5 Feb. 1456, Siena.

⁵⁰ ASS, Balia 2, f. 13r; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 120.

the very independence of the Sienese republic had been threatened, created support not only for the severe punishment of the conspirators but also for the institution of Balie with extraordinary authority that followed.

The Council of the People agreed that Pietro Tancredi, Antonio di Casino Casucci and Tommaso Niccolucci should be executed, and that Ghino and Pietro Bellanti and their sons be declared rebels. Others, including Mariano Bargagli and Guasparre Micheli, were summoned to appear before the Concistoro.⁵¹ Few, if any, obeyed; they did not wait to hear the terms of exile and the fines to which they were sentenced.⁵² A summary of Pietro Scacco's confession was sent to Alfonso, with assurances that the proceedings were in no sense a reflection on the king, or on Jacopo Piccinino. Piccinino was told that the conspirators were being punished for their atrocious crimes against the *reggimento*, including the intention to kill many principal citizens holding office, 'to satisfy their ambition and desire to make themselves greater and superior to others'.⁵³

For the moment, Antonio Petrucci was left untouched. The summaries of the conspirators' confessions indicate that he was not really involved in the plots of August 1456: they had asked him to come to Siena with an offer to pay for the victuals of his men, but he did not come because he had no money or suitable clothes. This scarcely sounds like fervid support for their plans.⁵⁴ After the arrests and executions he did try to incite Piccinino to advance on Siena. When Piccinino finally surrendered Orbetello to the Sienese and left for the kingdom of Naples by sea in mid-September, Antonio Petrucci put some of the men he had left behind into his own fortress at Perignano. Summoned to appear before the Balìa, he refused, leaving for the Papal States instead. On 13 October, the Council of the People decided that he should be declared a rebel, and that Perignano should be razed.⁵⁵

The decisive piece of evidence against him was a long letter he had written to Piccinino's secretary, Broccardo. He had been inter-

⁵¹ ASS, Concistoro 539, ff. 67v–69r.

⁵² For the sentencing see Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, pp. 32, 56–7, 72–6.

⁵³ ASS, Balìa 397, ff. 173v–175r, 182r–183v.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 183r; Balìa 2, f. 12v; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 121.

⁵⁵ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 256: Cristofano Gabrielli to Nicodemo da Pontremoli, 13 Oct. 1456, Siena.

rupted while he was writing it and hidden it under a pillow, but a spy at Perignano had found it and brought it to Giovanni Bichi in Siena. He was moved by the injustice done to his friends and the servants of the king, Petrucci said, and the insult offered to Alfonso, who should take vengeance. Although some citizens were enemies of the king and Piccinino, the people, who for the moment were keeping quiet, were devoted to them. Antonio needed 1,000 men and 6,000 ducats 'to do honour to His Majesty and make him my lord, because I would rather have the king for my lord than the Duke [of Milan] or the Florentines'; if Antonio succeeded, all of Siena would be Aragonese.⁵⁶ Antonio may well have meant only that he wanted to serve the king, but the letter could be construed as an offer to make Alfonso the lord of Siena. This letter was read out publicly from the palace of the Podestà to convince the people of his treachery. Sackfuls of his other papers were traced and examined. To the leading opponents of the conspirators he was the greatest traitor of them all. For years afterwards, he would be a cause of special concern, though he failed to launch even one serious attempt to return by force, and was disappointed in his hopes for help from Alfonso. But it could have been fears that he still enjoyed popular support in Siena that made him seem so dangerous. A generation later, his grandson Niccolo would evoke the memory of Antonio as a well-wisher of the Siennese *popolo*, and recalled being told 'many times' that Antonio had been made a rebel because of envy and ambition, while the *popolo* pitied and regretted him, and would have helped him if he had returned to the city.⁵⁷

That Antonio Petrucci and the other exiles might return to the city, and that they would find supporters there ready to help them, was a major preoccupation of their adversaries among the political elite. Further revelations, arrests, interrogations, exiles and executions kept alive the apprehension that the Siennese government and Siennese independence were in jeopardy. Concern to carry through the initial investigations and to maintain vigilance against continuing threats brought acceptance of some major institutional innovations, creating a more oligarchic regime that for a while seemed set fair to become permanent. Indeed, it has generally been assumed that one of the

⁵⁶ ASS, Balìa 397, ff. 194r–195v.

⁵⁷ ASS, Balìa 504, 70: Niccolo Petrucci, 19 July 1482, Colle.

major institutional innovations, a Balia with wide authority meeting alone, did become a permanent part of the government from this time.⁵⁸ Careful examination of the records shows this was not the case. The kind of Balia that met in the mid 1450s would not be appointed again until the late 1470s. Absence of documentation for separate Balie in the period between 1458 and 1477 is not due to the loss of their records but because there were no such Balie. Another major institutional innovation, which also proved temporary, had just as serious potential implications for the continuance of popular government in Siena, but has attracted less attention. This was a legislative council, the Balia maggiore, which for two years took the place of the Council of the People.

During the early 1450s, there had been a series of Balie fulfilling their traditional function of assisting the Concistoro in affairs of particular gravity or complexity. Apart from dealing with the political and administrative problems caused by the wars, some of them were appointed explicitly to meet the need for effective government within the city too. The provision for the appointment of the Balia elected in July 1453 spoke of the danger to the city, its territory and *reggimento*, from 'living in the way we live at present, so that there is contention in the councils over every little thing, and nothing that is needed is provided for'.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the authority of the Balie ceased as soon as each war ended. In July 1455, the Council of the People agreed that the next Balia should meet on its own and not with the Concistoro.⁶⁰ The probable reason for this unusual, if not entirely unprecedented,⁶¹ arrangement was a desire to maintain greater secrecy in deliberations about the campaign against Jacopo Piccinino, when there were already strong suspicions of the contacts he had with the conspirators. This Balia was followed by five others which also met alone, until terms were agreed with Piccinino in June 1456.

The Balia appointed on 30 August 1456 to continue the investigation into the conspiracy was unusual in its composition, and in the procedure for the selection of its members. They were to be the

⁵⁸ See, for example, David L. Hicks, 'The Sienese oligarchy and the rise of Pandolfo Petrucci, 1487-97', in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico. Politica, Economia, Cultura, Arte* (Pisa, 1996), III, p. 1053.

⁵⁹ ASS, Concistoro 521, f. 25r-v.

⁶⁰ ASS, Concistoro 533, ff. 13v-14r.

⁶¹ See Ascheri, *Siena nel Rinascimento*, pp. 40-1.

members of the outgoing Concistoro, including the gonfalonieri and the three councillors of the Captain of the People, and those men they might choose to join them.⁶² The Balìa as a whole was described by the Milanese ambassador, Nicodemo da Pontremoli, as 'about thirty of the most notable citizens of Siena', and as 'about thirty of the principal, and perhaps *the* principal men in Siena'.⁶³ This was not an accurate description. The most prominent citizens in the Balìa were, in fact, the members of the reform commission, all of whom served on it, and Cristofano Gabrielli. Eleven of the members of the Concistoro would not be appointed to any of the three other Balìa elected in 1457–8; nor would any of the six other men co-opted onto this Balìa who were not part of the reform commission. Only a third of this important Balìa could be described as among the 'principali' of Siena. Two members, Andrea di Checco di Luca, and Neroccio di Goro di Ser Neroccio, would be arrested in July 1457, accused of plotting with the rebels and executed.

Initially, the Balìa was to have authority for two months to continue the investigations and punish those found to be guilty. A month later, they were given full authority until the end of December to do what was needed to preserve Siena's territory, including change castellans and raise troops. Their diligence earned them another extension of their authority in October 1456 as they were charged with responsibility for the preservation of peace and *libertà*, for a further six months.⁶⁴ One of the first uses to which they put their new powers was to elect the Concistoro for November and December, rather than risk the chances of an unreliable board being drawn from the electoral purse.⁶⁵ Together with this new Concistoro, the Balìa decided in November that all the electoral purses should be renewed. It was notorious, they declared, that the current ones had been compiled under the influence of conspiracies, so that respectable citizens had been left out while those who were perverse or unworthy or under age had been put in. Renewing the purses would help to avoid further suspicions and scandals.⁶⁶

⁶² ASS, Concistoro 539, f. 69r.

⁶³ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 256: Nicodemo to Francesco Sforza, 18 Oct. 1456, Siena; b. 268: Nicodemo to F. Sforza, 23 Sept. 1456, Florence.

⁶⁴ ASS, Balìa 2, ff. 2r, 30r, 46v.

⁶⁵ ASS, Concistoro 541, f. 1r.

⁶⁶ ASS, Statuti di Siena 40, ff. 110r–111v.

To assist the Balia and the Concistoro in this task, the Council of the People elected thirty men from each monte. The selection of the ninety *imbossolatori* assumed further significance when they, together with the Balia and the members of the Concistoro, formed the core of the new Balia maggiore. The institution of the Balia maggiore on 28 December was justified by the grave suspicions and dangers confronting the Sienese *stato* and its *libertà*: it would put terror into the exiles and fortify the state. The Concistoro and Balia were to elect additional men to bring the number up to 160 or 170, and the new assembly was to have all the power and authority of the commune, 'absolute as well as ordinary', until it was revoked by the Council of the People and the General Council. They could appoint Balie as they saw fit. Those who sat on the Concistoro would join them during their term of office, and remain members afterwards. What they decided by a two-thirds majority in an assembly of at least 130 would have the force of legislation passed by the Council of the People and the General Council.⁶⁷ It was the Balia that decided this new assembly should be called the Balia maggiore; they also decided to elect 75 men to join it which would bring the numbers up to about 200.⁶⁸ This would be about half the number of *riseduti* qualified to sit in the Council of the People.

The Council of the People approved the institution of the Balia maggiore by 173 votes to 68. Presumably many voted in favour of it because they saw it as a temporary expedient to deal with a serious crisis; they would not have thought that they were disenfranchising their own assembly, so central to Sienese political life. Some of those who promoted and approved this innovation, however, did have a permanent reform in mind. One of its members, Lodovico Petroni, described it as 'a perpetual Balia of 150 men'.⁶⁹ Were the promoters of this innovation simply trying to eliminate the politically suspect or the politically undesirable? As with the Council of the People, those who sat on the Concistoro would automatically become members of the Balia maggiore, staying on it after their term of office was over. Unless the new electoral purses for the Concistoro

⁶⁷ ASS, Concistoro 561, ff. 10v, 12v–13r, 24v–25r.

⁶⁸ ASS, Balia 2, f. 110v.

⁶⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 256: Lodovico Petroni to Francesco Sforza, 17 Feb. 1456(7), Siena.

only, or largely, included the names of those who already sat in the *Balia maggiore*, in the course of a few years many of the *riseduti* who had not been brought onto it at the start would have joined it in any case.

Many, it seems, were not prepared to wait to find out. As more citizens became aware of the intention behind the reform or the implications of restricting the numbers of those enjoying the right to sit on the republic's main deliberative and legislative assembly, rumbles of discontent were heard. Soon those who had favoured this restriction realized that they had made an error of judgement, and that Sienese citizens were not ready for this. Some of the principal citizens, Nicodemo da Pontremoli, the Milanese ambassador, reported in April 1457, had told him that having restricted the *stato* to a general *Balia* of 200 citizens of their choice, and thus greatly upset many other worthy citizens, they wanted him to help them to amend this error.⁷⁰ This was done on 21 April. After hearing a mass of the Holy Spirit and taking an oath on a missal to be faithful to the government ('regimen'), the *Balia maggiore* agreed that a scrutiny should be held of all the *riseduti* who were not members of it, except those who had been deprived of political office or exiled. Apart from the eleven men from each *monte* who received the least votes in this scrutiny, the rest of the *riseduti* were to join the *Balia maggiore*.⁷¹ In effect, the expanded *Balia maggiore* would have the same membership as the Council of the People, purged of those men considered least reliable or least desirable.⁷² Writing to Nicodemo of what had been done, the executive *Balia* referred to it as a 'universal reconciliation' and told him that they were sure that all would now be

⁷⁰ 'havendo loro reducto lo stato in una balia generale de docento cittadini a loro modo per la quale haviano desperati molti altri cittadini da bene . . . emendariano per lo mezo mio questo errore'. (ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 269: Nicodemo to Francesco Sforza, 14 Apr. 1457, Florence.)

⁷¹ ASS, Statuti di Siena 40, ff. 44v–45v.

⁷² The thirty-three men excluded could not go forward for scrutiny for any other office, but if their name was drawn from the purse for the Concistoro they could join the *Balia maggiore*. Of those excluded, twenty-eight had taken the oath in 1450; of these, four would within months be prosecuted for having contacts with the rebels. Two, Tommaso Albertini and Biagio Dini, would be executed, two, Giovanni Doti and Dota Biringucci, reprieved from sentence of death and exiled for twenty-five years. A fifth man, Mariano Petroni, had already been ordered in February to stay out of the Val d'Orcia for five years.

of one will and one mind, for the preservation of liberty, just government and a peaceful regime.⁷³

The executive *Balia* (now known as the *Balia minore* to distinguish it from the *Balia maggiore*) that oversaw this important adjustment, was a new one. On 20 January 1457 the *Balia maggiore* had agreed that when the authority of the *Balia minore* expired in mid-April it should be replaced by another one, with eighteen members, to hold office for six months. Subsequently a new one would be appointed every six months for the next three years, unless the *Balia maggiore* decided against it. It was unprecedented for a succession of *Balie* to be planned like this. While it was normal when Siena was at war for there to be a series of *Balie*, succeeding one another while the conflict lasted, Siena was not at war, and this was not the justification offered for this innovation. It was the act of a prudent government to make timely provisions, the preamble to this legislation declared. Those who wished to cause trouble would be deterred if they knew that the government was prepared, and 'so it seemed necessary for some time' that authority should be given to some citizens 'who would watch continually over your safety'.⁷⁴

The primary concerns of the executive *Balie minori* were keeping track of the exiles, and tracking down further conspirators in Siena. Five men were arrested and exiled in February 1457, principally for conspiring with Piccinino in 1455–6.⁷⁵ All were men of substance. One, Goro Loli, was a doctor of laws, and a relative of Enea Piccolomini, the Bishop of Siena (soon to be Pope Pius II); another was Antonio, the son of Pietro Micheli. Another, Antonio Gori (described by the Milanese envoy as 'mad, rich and our enemy' in February 1452, when as Captain of the People he tried hard to get agreement for a league with Alfonso),⁷⁶ had the fifth highest assessment for the direct tax, the *lira*, in 1453.⁷⁷ If he had erred, Gori protested, it was through ignorance, not malice: he had been deceived. Why should he have wanted to change the regime, he said, coming

⁷³ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 257: *Balia* to Nicodemo, 25 Apr. 1457, Siena.

⁷⁴ ASS, Statuti di Siena 40, ff. 37r–38r.

⁷⁵ ASS, *Balia* 2, ff. 203v–207r.

⁷⁶ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 255: Sceva da Corte to Francesco Sforza, 19 Feb. 1452, Siena.

⁷⁷ Catoni and Piccinni, 'Alliramento e ceto dirigente', p. 460.

from a prominent family, well to do, and having had more offices than he wanted or merited?⁷⁸

But it was the very prominence of such citizens that prolonged the fears about the conspiracies in which they were accused of being involved. The expansion of the *Balia maggiore* was accompanied by a decision that all its members should take an oath not to form any cliques or factions, but to think only of the preservation of the present government and regime, the union of the citizens and a 'civic and honest life'.⁷⁹ To ensure that the members of the *reggimento* did live honestly, and in fear of God and of the Signoria, twenty-one men were to be selected by scrutiny in the *Balia maggiore*, and their names, which were to be kept secret, were to be placed in a new electoral purse. Three names a year were to be drawn out, and these men were to be known as 'the secret officials for civic and honest life (*li officiali secreti sopra il civile et honesta vivere*)'. They were to be vigilant lest any member of the *Balia maggiore* or the Council of the People should plot or contrive, especially with others, by word or deed, anything against the regime.⁸⁰

These fears were nourished when yet more plots came to light. Between July 1457 and April 1458 several men were executed and others exiled for maintaining contacts with the rebels or plotting to betray strongholds in Sienese territory to them. Most of them were less prominent than the group exiled in February; some were related to men already in exile. One was another close friend of Enea Piccolomini, Francesco Patrizi, arrested in July 1457; he was spared execution, because of his learning.⁸¹ Continued discoveries of accomplices of the exiles within the city did provide justification for the *Balia* to stay in office, but they seem genuine and not contrived by a group anxious to maintain a more oligarchical form of government.

The *Balia minore* would not have been a very useful instrument for such a group to further their aims, in any case. For all the importance attributed to it, there were considerable restrictions on its powers, particularly over appointments to offices. Significantly, the members were explicitly forbidden to give out offices among themselves;⁸² that

⁷⁸ ASS, *Balia* 492, 15: Antonio di Goro di Francesco, 12 Feb. 1456(7).

⁷⁹ ASS, *Balia* 4, f. 6v.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 5r–6r.

⁸¹ ASS, Concistoro 2416, f. 63v.

⁸² ASS, Concistoro 542, ff. 8v–11r.

would be one way in which the Balie of the late 1480s and 1490s would establish an oligarchical regime. The Balia minore could not become a centre of political patronage. Its members did maintain their own positions, but only by increasing the number of their colleagues: their membership was not renewed automatically. In theory, according to the legislation that instituted the Balia minore, a board of eighteen should have been elected in the Balia maggiore; this was how the one that took office in April 1457 was appointed. When the time came to renew the Balia in September 1457 and April 1458, what happened in practice was that all the members of the outgoing Balia became members of the new one, and additional men were elected. Thus the Balia of eighteen that took up office in April 1457 was replaced by one of 33, and that was replaced in April 1458 by one of 45. How this arrangement came to be made in September 1457 is not clear. In April 1458 the Balia maggiore agreed that the Concistoro and the new and old Balie minori could add those citizens they wished to the new Balia minore; they decided to elect all those members of the outgoing Balia minore that had not been elected to the new one, together with an additional three men from each monte. Eighteen members of the old Balia were listed as being added to the new one in this way, including important men like Agostino Borghesi, Giovanni Bichi and Pietro Biringucci.⁸³

It was quite usual for there to be substantial continuity of membership between Balie in the 1450s. The majority of the members of eight of the fourteen Balie appointed from July 1453 to May 1456 had served in the previous one: in the Balia of March 1456, thirteen of the fifteen members had served in the one before. Of the hundred or so men who served in the eighteen Balie from July 1453 to April 1458, nine served in ten or more. Jacomo di Guidino, for example, served in thirteen, Pietro Biringucci in eleven. These experienced men who were elected repeatedly to Balie would not cohere into a cabal able to dominate Sienese political life, as happened in the 1490s. If such a cabal existed in the Balie of 1457–8, they might have had to accept the expansion of the numbers of the Balia to ensure that all their own coterie continued in office—but the larger

⁸³ ASS, Concistoro 549, ff. 17v–18r. The additions to the Balie that took up office in April and in September 1457 on each occasion included six men who had not been members of any other of the Balie from July 1453.

the Balia minore, the harder it would have been for them to control its deliberations. If there was a group trying to establish an oligarchy, they were not having much success.

They would have proved unable even to maintain the Balie in being. The Concistoro's participation in deciding who should be added to the new Balia minore was not the only indication in early 1458 that it was beginning to emerge from under the Balia's shadow. On 29 March the Concistoro held a Consiglio di Richiesta to discuss 'current suspicions'—the prime concern of the Balia minore.⁸⁴ On 6 April, the Concistoro decided that a 'proposta generale' should be put to the next meeting of the Balia maggiore.⁸⁵ Proposte generali had been suspended in January 1457, because these opportunities for all members of the council to raise problems and air grievances were said to 'produce disturbances rather than fruitful proposals'.⁸⁶ This had been agreed in the same session of the Balia maggiore that approved the appointment of six-monthly executive Balie for the next three years. While these initiatives in early 1458 could be read as an attack on the position of the Balia by a particular board of the Concistoro, there is no sign of a struggle for power at this time. The Captain of the People for March and April, Tommaso di Onofrio di Tura, was an experienced political figure; he was himself a member of the Balia, sitting on ten of the eighteen Balie from July 1453 to April 1458. It seems rather that the Balia minore was running out of steam, and there had been difficulties assembling a quorum.⁸⁷

The Balia that took up office in April 1458 was the last of this series. Just before they left office in October they decided that the Balia maggiore should be abolished from 1 November and the Council of the People should resume its accustomed role and authority, although those who had been excluded from the Balia maggiore should also be excluded from the Council.⁸⁸ They had already, in

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 13r. They decided that three men from each monte should be elected to make provisions to be considered by the Concistoro and the Balia minore, and then by the Balia maggiore.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 16v.

⁸⁶ ASS, Statuti di Siena 40, f. 39v.

⁸⁷ For example, ASS, Balia 6, f. 69v.

⁸⁸ ASS, Statuti di Siena 40, f. 136v.

late September, passed some provisions that envisaged there would be no *Balia minore* either—that *proposte generali* could only be put to the Council with the approval of two-thirds of the full Concistoro and the Nine of Ward, and that there should be an independent budget for the Nine of Ward (‘a most useful office for your *reggimento*, especially when there is no *Balia*’).⁸⁹

Concern about the exiles and the help they might receive from outside Siena had been eased by the death of King Alfonso on 27 June 1458. The sense of relief felt in Siena at his death, the conviction that it spelt ruin for their enemies, prepared the ground for the abandonment of the extraordinary *Balie* that autumn. Perhaps the oligarchy that Pandolfo Petrucci and his political allies established in Siena by the late 1490s was the kind of regime that the conspirators had had in mind. In fact, the most successful moves towards oligarchy that could be observed in the 1450s were the establishment of the six-month *Balie minori* and of the *Balia maggiore*, but these moves seem to have been directed not so much by a desire to concentrate power in a few hands, as by a desire to exclude those who it was believed were trying to undermine the popular government. If the opponents of the conspirators were seeking to restrict admission to the government to a controlled group, it was a fairly large group that they had in mind. Even this degree of shift towards oligarchy was so unwelcome to the members of the *reggimento* that the experiment did not last long. Too many Siennese still cherished their ‘governo popolare’.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 134r–135v.

CHAPTER THREE

MAKING THE NOBLES UNWELCOME

The death of Pope Calixtus in early August 1458, a few weeks after the death of King Alfonso, heralded a fresh challenge to the popular government. The new pope, elected on 19 August, was Pius II, Enea Piccolomini, a member of one of the family of Gentiluomini largely excluded from the *reggimento*. Within weeks of his election, he was bringing pressure to bear on the Sienese, not to create a more oligarchical regime, but to expand the *reggimento* by admitting the Monte dei Gentiluomini to a full share in office.

The ‘nobili’ that Pius II badgered the Sienese into admitting to the government were not a group for which the English term ‘nobility’ seems a very apt description. They did not form a group set apart by wealth, titles, legal privilege, the enjoyment of special rights, or jurisdiction. They were not a military caste: what fortresses they had constituted no threat to the communal government, and there is no indication that they could draw on reserves of clients and retainers willing to fight for them. Most members of the Monte dei Gentiluomini of the mid-fifteenth century, including Pius’s own family, the Piccolomini, were descended from families that had used wealth derived from banking and trade in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to buy lands, rather than from rural nobles who had migrated to the city. They had been set apart from other leading Sienese families by their classification as ‘magnates’, not by descent from a distinct social caste.

Although they were generally excluded from the highest executive magistracy from the late thirteenth century, members of the ‘magnate’ families had had a share in other important offices and an influential voice in the making of policy during the successive regimes of the fourteenth century.¹ Under the government of the Nove in

¹ There is a useful summary of these developments in Danilo Marrara, *Riseduti e nobiltà. Profilo storico-istituzionale di un oligarchia toscana nei secoli XVI–XVIII* (Pisa, 1976), pp. 62–74; see also Marrara, ‘I magnati e il governo del Comune di Siena’,

the first half of the fourteenth century, the magnates had still been consolidating their property, and were still richer in general than the richest of the Nove merchants.² On the whole, they had adapted to the changing political institutions of the republic. The most powerful of the magnate families, the Salimbeni, however, took a distinctive path. Deliberately building up a power base in the territory, with much of their lands and castles former communal property, they behaved more like an established family of rural nobility seeking to establish personal dominance over the city. Their closest political allies within the city were not their fellow magnates but the Dodici, for whom association with the Salimbeni became something of a liability. The new regime set up in late 1403, after the Dodici and Salimbeni had become involved in plotting with the Florentines, excluded the Dodici completely and launched a series of campaigns that destroyed the power of the Salimbeni.³

Some share of office, if a reduced one, was still given to other magnate families. The Monte dei Gentiluomini no longer had a quarter of the seats on Balie as they had done in the later fourteenth century, and after a reorganisation in 1415 of the Ordini, the bodies that formed part of the full Concistoro,⁴ no longer had members sitting in any capacity as part of the Concistoro either. But they still sat on important bodies such as the financial office, the Biccherna, and the Mercanzia, which had extensive powers over the economic life of Siena, and they had a third of the seats in the General Council, which gave them some nominal part in the legislative process, as well as a share of the offices of vicar, podestà and castellan in the territory. That they continued to hold communal offices in Siena's subject territory, even as the commune's direct control over it was being strengthened, is itself a measure of their lack of personal power there. Economic factors—notably the dramatic decline in the population of the Sienese subject communities,⁵ which led to the aban-

pp. 239–76. For magnates under the Nove, see Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune* (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 63–83, 87, 93–4, 182, 309–13; for the magnates' share in government under the Dodici, see Wainwright, 'Conflict and popular government in fourteenth-century Siena', p. 67.

² Isaacs, 'Magnati, comune e stato a Siena', p. 87.

³ Carniani, *I Salimbeni*, pp. 269–79.

⁴ Ascheri, *Siena nel Rinascimento*, p. 91.

⁵ Maria Ginatempo, *Crisi di un territorio. Il popolamento della Toscana senese alla fine del Medioevo* (Florence, 1988).

donment of many places where in the past there had been significant settlements over which it was worth exercising some measure of lordship—reinforced the tendency of the magnate families to integrate into the society of the city of Siena, rather than maintain a distinctive social and economic position outside it.

Not that the families comprising the Monte dei Gentiluomini lost any sense of being a discrete group: their very membership of the monte and consequent exclusion from the major political offices was a constant reminder. There are signs too, that at least some of the Gentiluomini retained some sense of that corporate identity with the other members of their clan that had been one of the characteristics marking them out as ‘magnates’ in the thirteenth century. Even in the early sixteenth century members of some of the larger families—the Tolomei, the Piccolomini and the Saracini—still clustered together. The Tolomei, who had been the nearest rivals in wealth and power to the Salimbeni in the fourteenth century, formed the most striking concentration, with all the members of the family living in the area of the city that took its name from the church of San Cristoforo, facing the thirteenth century Palazzo Tolomei that is still one of the most imposing landmarks of Siena. Although the heads of the Tolomei households were assessed for taxes individually, a group of the ‘homini et consorti di casa Tolomei’ were still assessed together for a substantial sum in 1509.⁶

Taken together, the collective wealth of the Tolomei then was considerable, although apparently somewhat reduced from the level of the mid-fifteenth century.⁷ In both periods, much of this collective wealth was in the hands of a few individuals. The same was true of the other large clan, the Piccolomini, which included a few wealthy households and some which were impoverished.⁸ Enea

⁶ A.K. Isaacs, ‘Popolo e monti nella Siena del primo Cinquecento’, *Rivista storica italiana*, 82 (1970), p. 56.

⁷ In 1453, nineteen heads of household had a total lira assessment of 61,975 lire; in 1509, twenty-four heads of household were assessed for a total of 46,575 lire (*ibid.*, p. 56); Catoni and Piccinni, ‘Alliramento e ceto dirigente’, p. 455.

⁸ In 1453 there were 25 Piccolomini heads of households assessed for a total of 82,225 lire, with only three members of the clan (one a woman, Jacoma, widow of Tommaso) accounting for much of that. In 1509, the sixteen Piccolomini households clustered together in the *compagnia* of Pantaneto were assessed for a total of 72,175 lire and there were other members of the family in other areas of the city (*ibid.*).

Piccolomini's branch of the clan in 1453 was one of the poorest; by the early sixteenth century, thanks to the benefits he had been able to bestow on his closest relatives, their descendants were the richest individuals in the city.⁹ Collectively the Monte dei Gentiluomini rivalled the Monte dei Nove as the wealthiest of the monti, but there would be many men of very modest means in the city whose only claim to distinction was an old family name.

However well-integrated socially and economically they were, in the mid-fifteenth century both the Gentiluomini and the Dodici were regarded as politically suspect. The Dodici were, if anything, treated with greater suspicion.¹⁰ Apprehension of the potential dangers the Dodici and Gentiluomini posed to the regime may have been heightened by the knowledge that not all members of the governing monti desired their continued exclusion from it. In the debate on the *proposta generale* in the Council of the People in January 1451, Jacomo Marzi proposed that the Gentiluomini should be eligible to serve as priors on the Concistoro—a suggestion denounced as a threat to the popular government.¹¹ Antonio Petrucci, in exile in May 1457, claimed to have an understanding with some of the principal men in Siena that if he returned to the city 'in the name of liberty and the people',¹² all the Gentiluomini and Dodici would be brought into the *reggimento*, and the Riformatori would be expelled.¹³ Some measures concerning the Gentiluomini and Dodici were drawn up following the death of Alfonso in July 1458. Whether these changed their position in the regime, or were just another round of precautionary exiles should the removal of Alfonso from the scene occasion any upheavals in Tuscany, is not apparent from the records. After Enea Piccolomini was elected pope, members of the Balia took an oath not to talk about them.¹⁴

It was not long before Pius gave notice that he had his own agenda concerning the Gentiluomini, one that he would press insistently upon the reluctant Sienese for most of his pontificate. On 4 September

⁹ Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', p. 56.

¹⁰ See above, p. 13.

¹¹ ASS, Concistoro 509, f. 7r-v; see above, p. 12 for the response to his proposals.

¹² 'con fama di libertà et di popolo'.

¹³ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 269: copy of a letter 'da uno che sta in Napoli scripta ad uno del collegio di Balia', 29 May 1457, Naples.

¹⁴ ASS, Balia 10, f. 106r.

1458, after much discussion of a brief from Pius, the *Balia maggiore* agreed that the pope's family, the Piccolomini, were to be admitted to the 'reggimento popolare'.¹⁵ In his memoirs, Pius wrote that the Sienese, anticipating that he would ask for the admission of all the Gentiluomini, brought the Piccolomini into the *reggimento* in the hope that this concession would satisfy him and ward off further requests. The brief discussed by the *Balia maggiore*, however, was said to be in recommendation of the Piccolomini. Pius does not mention sending such a brief at all, but he did record that he asked that the other nobles be treated the same as the Piccolomini. If all the nobles were not brought into the government, he thought, the Sienese had done as good as nothing. It did not befit the dignity of the pope that the nobles from whom he was himself descended should be 'kept in servitude'.¹⁶ This request was not even put before the *Balia maggiore*.¹⁷ Concern to prevent it being brought up by a member of the *reggimento* sympathetic to the idea may have been behind the provision, approved by the *Balia minore* shortly before it left office, restricting the *proposta generale* in order to 'avoid all those matters that could easily generate trouble and division between citizens and especially those of the *reggimento*'.¹⁸

Another reason for concern was Pius's attitude to the exiles. He maintained that they had been wrongly accused of conspiring with Piccinino. He did not ask for all the exiles to be allowed to return—one reason he gave in his memoirs for desiring the admission of the nobles to the *reggimento*, was that it would be good for the city if they took the place of those who had been expelled from the government¹⁹—but he had close personal ties to some of them, and had already interceded for them before he became pope. To sweeten the refusal to bring the nobles into the *reggimento*, therefore, on 1 October the *Balia maggiore* set aside the elaborate procedures designed to impede proposals in favour of exiles, and decided to absolve Goro Loli, 'because he is related' to the pope and 'is one of the leading

¹⁵ ASS, Concistoro 552, f. 3v.

¹⁶ Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Papa Pio II, *I Commentarii*, ed. Luigi Totaro, 2 vols (Milan, 1984), I, p. 287.

¹⁷ ASS, Concistoro 552, ff. 3v–4r, 7r–10r, 20r.

¹⁸ ASS, Statuti di Siena 40, ff. 134v–135r.

¹⁹ Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, I, p. 287. Relatives of many of those exiled or executed had been excluded from the government as well.

men around him', and so would be a valuable advocate for the city.²⁰ Goro Loli did indeed become a useful friend at the papal court, and after Pius's death, a leading member of the regime in Siena.

His absolution was one of the last acts of the *Balia maggiore*, before it reverted to being the Council of the People. The next day, in the Council of the People, this measure was approved again. Now it was the Concistoro and the Council of the People that had to deal with Pius's unwelcome suggestions for the expansion of the *reggimento*. Pius told the Siennese ambassadors who were sent to Rome to swear formal obedience to him as the new pope, that he wanted to do so much good to the city that the Siennese Pope Pius would be remembered for a long time—but love had to be reciprocal.²¹ Three leading members of the regime were sent to Rome in December to explain why it had been decided 'unanimously' not to do as the pope wished. Even to bring the nobility in some limited way into the *reggimento* would disturb that peace and stability of the state which they were sure was Pius's aim, as it was that of 'all our *reggimento* and of our senate [Council of the People]'. The nobility had withdrawn voluntarily from the government, although they did participate in many public offices. To reintegrate them would destroy concord, because of the 'incompatibility' of the natures of *nobili* and *popolari*. It was impossible to make equal the 'munificence and proud spirit of the nobility and popular moderation'.²²

This argument about the incompatible natures of nobles and *popolari* was repeated in a letter the Concistoro sent to Francesco Sforza on 3 January 1459. 'There can be no concord where there is no meeting of minds and no identity of outlook on the common good of the fatherland. But to make equal the proud spirit of the nobles and popular moderation and equality would be impossible, like a derogation of a law of nature'²³—especially in Siena where there were memories of the blood spilt in taking fortresses to preserve justice and the public welfare. The nobles were regarded as 'a dear

²⁰ ASS, Concistoro 552, ff. 20v–22r.

²¹ ASS, Concistoro 2416, f. 55v.

²² 'parificare la generosità et la elatione dela nobiltà et la mediocrità popolare' [*ibid.*].

²³ 'parificare la elatione deli nobili et la mediocrità et equalità popolare sarebbe impossibile come derogare a lege di natura'.

limb of our *reggimento*'²⁴ and were only excluded from those honours which they had spontaneously renounced long before, wisely recognizing that their participation in the government could only cause trouble. If they were reintegrated in the *reggimento*, their nature would be the same as in former times 'because everything easily returns to its natural condition if there is no impediment'.²⁵

How seriously should these reasons be taken? Did Siennese politicians really believe that it was contrary to the laws of nature for *nobili* and *popolari* to share the government of the city? Given that there was little if anything to distinguish the way of life of the great majority of the Siennese Gentiluomini from their *popolari* neighbours, such an assertion should probably be read as a literary flourish rather than a serious argument. Twenty years later, the Gentiluomini would be integrated into *popolare* government with little trouble and no indication that the Siennese then thought the laws of nature were being violated. On the other hand, in the late 1450s many older Siennese could remember the years when the troops of the commune were fighting to take the lands and fortresses of the Salimbeni, and knew that the bloodshed referred to in the letter to Francesco Sforza was not just a figure of speech. Nevertheless, the campaigns of living memory had been directed against only a minority of the Siennese nobles; most of them were not implicated in the plots of the Salimbeni. Far more alarming to the *riseduti* and their families than the remote prospect of the nobles trying to dominate the city by force, was the prospect of having to surrender a portion of the offices from which they had been excluded, particularly if the nobles were distributed among the three governing *monti* rather than extra seats on government boards being created to accommodate them. There was also the fear that if they were admitted en bloc, with the Monte dei Gentiluomini becoming the fourth *monte* in the government, the equilibrium among the governing *monti* that had been maintained for over fifty years would be disturbed. 'For a long time, over fifty years, our *reggimento* has been kept in liberty and good order [*optimo stato*] by the form the government takes at present', the Concistoro

²⁴ 'carissimo membro del nostro regimento'

²⁵ 'perché ciascuna cosa facilmente ritorna ala naturale sua conditione non impedita'. ASS, Concistoro 1677, ff. 2v-3v.

told Francesco Sforza, 'nor can it be altered by any aggregation without sedition, discord and grave danger'.²⁶

Yet Pius was determined to have his way, and the Sieneſe began to yield. Why, when what he was asking them to do was ſo unwelcome to many of the *riseduti*? The only explanation they gave was the deſire to pleaſe and honour the pope. But there would alſo be the conſideration that if they offended the pope, and he decided to uſe force to get his way—perhaps by backing the exiles to whom he was ſympathetic—they were not ſure who they could turn to for help. A regime in Siena which included the nobles and was backed by the pope was much leſs of a threat to Florence than a regime dominated by the King of Naples would be, ſo they could not look for much aſſiſtance from their neighbours. Nor would Francesco Sforza have good reaſon to make an enemy of the pope by helping the Sieneſe reſiſt him. In fact, the duke was prepared, at Pius's requeſt, to encourage the Sieneſe to do as the pope wiſhed, although he did feel that Pius was pushing too hard and too faſt, and that he was being badly advised by ſome in Siena 'who have too high an opinion of their own wiſdom'.²⁷ The admission of the nobles to the government of Siena was not an iſſue that threatened the ſecurity of Tuscany, let alone the peace of Italy. This was a problem that the Sieneſe had to deal with on their own.

As Pius planned to travel from Rome to Mantua for the congreſs he had ſummoned to diſcuſs a crusade againſt the Turks, the proſpect of his publicly ſnubbing the Sieneſe by avoiding the city on his way northward pushed them into devising a way to admit the nobles to the *reggimento*. On 22 January the Council of the People approved the appointment of ambaaſadors to aſk Pius to come to Siena. He was to be told that as a ſign of confidence in him, no one would be ſent into exile as was cuſtomary when potentates came to Siena, but he was aſked to give orders that there ſhould be no attempt to change the *reggimento*. No one was to even ſpeak of altering 'the trinity of the preſent *reggimento*', on pain of confiscation of all their property.²⁸ Out of reſpect for the pope, provisions would be made

²⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 3r.

²⁷ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 270: Francesco Sforza to Nicodemo da Pontremoli, 9 Jan. 1459, Milan.

²⁸ This provision was paſſed by a majority of 279 to 25.

by the Council of the People that Siennese nobles born, bred and domiciled in the city would be made eligible to join it [*abilitati al . . . reggimento*'], except for certain families, but only when the present electoral purses for the Concistoro were finished (which would not be for another six years or so). Even this procrastinating provision was to be considered conditional on Pius's coming to Siena, and agreeing to it. If he came, he was to be respectfully asked not to call for any further changes to the *reggimento*. As a sweetener, it was agreed that his sister's son, Antonio Todeschini, should be placed in the *'bossoli degli sciolti'*²⁹ of the priors and that his brothers and his father Nanni would be eligible for scrutiny for all offices. These other nephews of the pope, Andrea, Francesco and Jacopo, who would take the surname Piccolomini, would become the most influential nobles in the city in the later fifteenth century.

Pius professed himself pleased by the admission of the nobles into the *reggimento*—but refused to send a brief promising not to ask for anything more.³⁰ When he came to Siena, arriving on 24 February, he made it plain that he wanted the Gentiluomini admitted without delay, although he did not press the matter immediately. As a token of goodwill he awarded the Siennese the golden rose, the beautiful jewel given each year to someone who had earned special merit with the pope. Confident as ever in the power of his own eloquence, he arranged to address the Council of the People himself at his lodgings, on 11 March. According to his memoirs, Pius thanked them for the admission of the Piccolomini to the *reggimento*, and spoke of how he had defended the interests of Siena throughout his career. As pope he had defended Siena's liberty and prestige, but the favourable condition they were in could not endure long unless they reformed the regime. What city had ever been more divided than Siena was? One part of the *popolo* had lost all hope of participating in the government (probably a reference to the Dodici), and the nobility, while they held some offices, were kept out of the Palazzo. Those who were in government were divided by continual hatreds and dissensions. A new wound had been made by the recent executions

²⁹ That is, the purse in which were placed the name slips of those unable to hold office at the time their names were drawn, and from which name slips were extracted when a substitute was needed.

³⁰ ASS, Concistoro 1993, 59: Bartolo di Tura, Jacomo di Guidino and Lorenzo di Ghino, 5 Feb. 1458(9), Perugia.

and exiles. Externally, their enemies were near at hand, their friends far away. While Pius was on the papal throne, no one would dare to attack their territory, but he would not defend them from their enemies within the city. All he could do was counsel them to seek concord, the preserver of cities, the concord that came from just government. But for over fifty years 'you have treated like slaves those noble citizens whose ancestors founded this city, and who spontaneously, not constrained by force, conferred the government on you'. The nobles should be given their due honours and called to take the place of those who had been exiled and executed; they had never rebelled, preferring to serve the city in peace, rather than dominate by sedition. 'If you are wise, you will receive among you the nobles who now, laying aside all pride in their wealth, have become similar to you, if not more humble.' This was the way to preserve their liberty, and their city. If they rejected this advice, they should expect no benefit from Pius for their republic. If they gave the nobles their due, they could expect not only the help of Pius in any difficulty but the protection of God, who always took the part of the just.³¹

After the cardinals had endorsed his words, the citizens left, according to Pius, cursing the pope and criticizing what he had said, recalling every minimal error the nobles had ever committed, saying that nothing was more difficult than admitting someone to participate in governing—the government of a republic was acquired by arms, not words. Some, he said, disliked the idea of sharing office, others disliked the idea of sharing the profits of governing. Some thought that if the nobles, who were more worthy than they, were admitted, they themselves would be excluded. 'No one was inclined to concede anything.'³² Much the same description of the mood of the citizens was given to Nicodemo da Pontremoli by Cristofano Gabrielli and others. Apart from the consideration that 'no prophet is honoured in his own country', Pius's efforts were being hampered by 'our avarice, because we don't want to divide these emoluments of ours among so many, nor among those of more substance than us [*'ne fra gente da più de noy*']', they told him. Some told Nicodemo that it would be very difficult, if not impossible.³³

³¹ Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, I, pp. 319–25.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 326–7.

³³ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 258: Nicodemo to Francesco Sforza, 1 Apr. 1459, Siena.

The pope stayed on in Siena to keep up the pressure, insisting that, as a matter of honour, he must have what he had asked for. According to Pius, while the older and weightier citizens argued that they should pay heed to the pope's words, the younger, inexperienced—and more numerous—citizens were opposed, and meeting together in small groups, threatened their seniors with exile or death. Pius claimed that he had been advised to use force by some of the wealthy citizens who had followers they could call on, but he said he did not want to. If his wishes were opposed, he would withdraw his favour from the city, and that would be revenge enough.³⁴ It was to please the pope, and because of the benefits he had bestowed on Siena and would bestow in the future, according to the official record, that on 16 March a Council of the People, at which over 300 councillors were present, decided that 45 men should be elected to meet with the Concistoro and draw up some proposals to be put before another council of at least 300—but they were not to touch any of the electoral purses.³⁵ Theirs was not an easy task. When they showed their proposals to Pius on 30 March he told them that he did not like them at all.³⁶ The draft was revised to take account of his objections, only to be rejected by the Council of the People on 10 April. After further revisions, the proposals were finally accepted by the Council by 236 votes to 75, on 15 April.³⁷

To please Pius—by whose assumption to the papal throne God, it seemed, had opened the heavens to shower benefits upon his people—the Gentiluomini of the city and the territory of Siena were to be accepted as brothers ('fraternalmente') into 'the present *popolare* government', and to be eligible to hold all offices. This did not mean, it was expressly stated in the legislation, that 'the present laudable and peaceful *reggimento popolare* should be changed in any way or form, or that any name should be added, but rather the *reggimento*, Council and Captain of the People', should be so called in perpetuity. Any Gentiluomo brought into the *reggimento* who asked for the restitution of, or compensation for, any lands or fortresses taken from him or his ancestors by the present regime would be expelled from

³⁴ Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, pp. 326–9.

³⁵ ASS, Concistoro 555, ff. 14v–15v.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 25r.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 25v–36r.

it again with all his descendants in the male line. A scrutiny would be held to elect 33 Gentiluomini to join the Council of the People. The names of twenty would be placed in a separate electoral purse for the Concistoro; the Piccolomini would retain the separate purse they had at the moment, and a name would only be drawn from the purse of the other Gentiluomini if there was no eligible Piccolomini name left. All the other electoral purses were to stay as they were; regulations were laid down as to how the Gentiluomini were to be included in them when the time came for their renewal. They were to have one-seventh of the offices of ambassador, and of castellan; no Gentiluomo was to be castellan of a place that had belonged to him or to his family. The Piccolomini, at Pius's request, were to return to the Monte dei Gentiluomini.

After these provisions had been approved by the Council of the People, a General Council of over 400 was summoned and gave its approval. Then the priors, the Captain of the People and the whole Council of the People left the palace and went to tell the pope what they had done. Pius thanked them graciously—although he gave them notice that he hoped in time to have all he wanted. The Concistoro then returned to the palace, while bells rang out, and in the evening there was more music, with torches and bonfires of celebration. The next day about two hundred nobles, after going to thank the pope, came to thank the Concistoro and the whole republic and to pledge their obedience. Asked by the notary of the Concistoro if they accepted 'this benefit', all shouted 'Yes' in reply, and then swore an oath, their hand on a crucifix placed on a copy of the gospels, of perpetual obedience and reverence to the 'present popular regime'.³⁸

Although Pius had not really got what he wished, some of the benefits the Sienese had hoped for came their way on 18 April when he announced his decision to canonize Catherine of Siena, to elevate the see of Siena from a bishopric to an archbishopric, and to cede Radicofani (which the Sienese held in fief from the papacy) to Siena in perpetuity. He also asked for the banker Ambrogio Spannocchi, a member of the Monte dei Dodici, to be admitted to the regime. Two days later, he requested the addition of seven more

³⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 35v–38v.

Gentiluomini to the Council of the People.³⁹ Once he had left Siena on 23 April to continue his slow progress to Mantua, however, the pressure was off the Sienese and they were in no hurry to make further concessions. It was 20 August before the Council of the People agreed to the admission to the council of seven more nobles, to be nominated by Pius.⁴⁰ Even this may have been an attempt to divert Pius from the representations he had been making on behalf of some of the exiles. The pope was to be asked, tactfully, not to intercede any more for the exiles or to give audience to any rebels.⁴¹ Eventually, in November, a concession was made on Francesco Patrizi, whose terms of exile were eased to exclude him only from the city and territory of Siena.⁴² Again there are signs that the Sienese were using a concession on one matter dear to the pope's heart to try to ward off insistence on others. While Pius had shown his annoyance over the matter of Patrizi to the Sienese envoys, he had declared that he would make no more demands concerning rebels or exiles—or the Dodici.⁴³

The issue of admitting the Dodici to the regime loomed large as Pius visited Siena and spent some months in the countryside around the city in the spring and early summer of 1460. When he had brought up the idea in Mantua during the winter, he had been firmly told by the Sienese ambassador Niccolo Severini that this 'would be the final ruin of the city'.⁴⁴ In his memoirs, Pius wrote that he broached the subject while he was in Siena, having consulted 'the wiser men in the government and those who seemed free from personal prejudice' as to how the government should be reformed. They were the men who suggested, he said, that the Dodici 'of whom there were about four hundred, including many rich merchants', should be brought into the regime. But when the news got about, the Concistoro and 'a great crowd of citizens' came to the pope to beg him not to speak of the Dodici: they would rather eat their own children than admit the seditious, troublemaking, bloodthirsty Dodici

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 40r, 41v.

⁴⁰ ASS, Concistoro 557, f. 41r-v.

⁴¹ ASS, Concistoro 2416, ff. 63r-66r.

⁴² ASS, Concistoro 1677, ff. 189v-190v, 197r.

⁴³ ASS, Concistoro 2416, f. 66r-v.

⁴⁴ Irene Polverini Fosi, "La comune, dolcissima patria": Siena e Pio II', in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Impruneta, 1987) p. 515.

to the *reggimento*. On the other hand, if he wanted further favours for the nobles, they would be disposed to agree.⁴⁵

In fact, it seems that the members of the *reggimento* were unwilling to make any further changes. The Milanese ambassadors attributed this to suspicions that Pius, instigated by Goro Loli, was giving alms to the exiles, and to misgivings that the reforms to the government that Pius was promoting would turn out badly, in ways he did not intend.⁴⁶ Pius also linked the matter of the exiles and opposition to further reform, but took a less charitable view. He resented the Sienese checking up on his dealings with Antonio Petrucci and other exiles, claiming the whole issue had been fabricated by those who opposed his wishes to improve the position of the Gentiluomini and bring the Dodici into the regime, turning the *popolo* against any further concessions to the nobles. If the government were reformed, he said, they would not find it so easy to 'tyrannize over this republic'.⁴⁷

Relations between Pius and the *reggimento* of Siena remained unsatisfactory to both parties for the rest of his pontificate. In the summer of 1462, he tried the tactic that had worked for him in 1459, threatening not to come to the city when he was planning a trip to Tuscany, unless he got what he wanted. What he wanted this time was the admission of fifty more Gentiluomini to the Council of the People. A Consiglio di Richiesta was summoned to discuss this request on 14 May, and after a long debate approved the response to be made by 215 votes to one. The reply was read out to the Council of the People the following day, who approved it unanimously. In substance, it declared that the nobles should be content with the considerable share in the *reggimento* they had been given; the *reggimento* had concluded that nothing more could be done without disturbing the city, and they were sure the pope did not want that.⁴⁸ Indignant, Pius wrote claiming that his request had not been made known to the *popolo*—if their opinion had been consulted, the result would have been very different. So on 27 May the Concistoro and the Nine of Ward called a Consiglio di Richiesta of all the *riseduti*

⁴⁵ Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, pp. 696–7.

⁴⁶ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 260: Otto da Carreto and Agostino Rossi to Francesco Sforza, 30 June 1460, Siena.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: Otto da Carretto, Agostino Rossi and Giovanni Caimo, 16 June 1460, Petriolo; Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, pp. 706–9.

⁴⁸ ASS, Concistoro 574, ff. 11r–13v.

from the Nove, Riformatori and Monte del Popolo. This council, at which 235 *riseduti* were present, voted unanimously to stand by the refusal of the pope's demand, 'to strengthen and preserve the present popular regime'.⁴⁹

The Sienese were anxious and agitated, but resolute.⁵⁰ Pius, equally intransigent, staying outside the city, made his displeasure plain. Furthermore, he had heightened the tension between himself and the Sienese by recommending the abandonment of the *monti*. He succeeded only in provoking the summons of more councils excluding the nobles—a Consiglio di Richiesta, with 228 present, on 11 June, and a Council of the People of *popolari* only on 20 June. This decided provisions should be drawn up concerning the decisions about the nobles, and 'to confirm the present trinity' of Popolo, Riformatori and Nove. These provisions, approved by the Council of the People on 26 June, recalled the unanimity there had been in several recent councils that the nobles should not be given any greater part in the *reggimento* than they had been granted already. No official was to propose this; no one was to advise it; no one was to propose distributing the nobles among the Nove, Popolo and Riformatori. If it was absolutely necessary to discuss such matters, any nobles present would have to leave the councils during the debate.⁵¹ If the pope pushed them any further, one observer thought, they would not only not grant anything more, but would revoke what they had already conceded.⁵²

Neither side would budge. Pius had pushed the Sienese as far as they would go. He insisted that they would get nothing further from him unless they gave him what he wanted, but that was a price they were prepared to pay. They did not revoke what they had granted—at least, not while Pius was alive. Within months of Pius's death in August 1464, the nobles were excluded from the *reggimento*. The expulsion might have come about even more quickly had there not been an epidemic in the city in the autumn, so that many of the *riseduti*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 23r-v.

⁵⁰ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 262: Giustinian Cavitello to Francesco Sforza, 14 May 1462, Siena.

⁵¹ ASS, Concistoro 574, ff. 50v-51r.

⁵² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 262: Otto da Carretto to Francesco Sforza, 16 Aug. 1462, Siena.

left for the country and it was difficult to assemble a quorate council. When the process did get under way, it happened rapidly. It began on 16 December with a decision by the Concistoro that the Council of the People should be summoned to decide what share the Gentiluomini should have in the new electoral purses for the gonfalonieri, and for the centurioni and capitani delle masse, offices which had their origins in the military organization of the *popolo* in earlier centuries. The next day the Council decided the Concistoro should elect 27 men (Nove, Riformatori and Popolari, no Gentiluomini) to draw up provisions about this. They were appointed that day, had completed their work by the following day and on 19 December the provisions were approved by the Council of the People—‘excluding the nobles’—by 271 votes to eight.⁵³ That such significant legislation should be drafted and agreed with such speed suggests there had been secret consultations among the *popolari* as to what should be done and how. The Gentiluomini were left no time to organize any opposition—if they had been minded to do so, for they probably knew the blow would fall sooner or later, and made no protest when it did come.

The provisions were made ‘in the name of the undivided TRINITY’.⁵⁴ It was declared that as it was ‘almost impossible’ to make Gentiluomini gonfalonieri without ‘very grave detriment to all the *popolari*’, they should not serve in that office, or as centurioni or capitani delle masse. The same problem arose for the Captain of the People, and to a still greater degree because of the importance of that office. Seeing that the aggregation of the nobles to the *reggimento* had been brought about by great insistence ‘and almost by force’, and with offers of great benefits to the *popolari* which had not been fulfilled, to observe justice and to restore to the *popolari* what was rightfully theirs, the Gentiluomini were to have only that share in the *reggimento* they had had before Pius was elected. Only the ‘original Piccolomini’ were to remain, as *popolari*, divided between the Nove, Riformatori and the Monte del Popolo, as they had been admitted to the *reggimento* freely. Cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini, his father, grandfather and brothers were to remain in

⁵³ ASS, Concistoro 589, ff. 29r, 30v–33r.

⁵⁴ ‘TRINITAS’ and ‘TRINITA’ were written in capital letters in the manuscript (*ibid.*, ff. 31v, 32r).

the *reggimento* as well, as were Cardinal Giacomo Ammanati (who had adopted the surname Piccolomini) and Cristofano his nephew and their descendants. This privileged treatment for the Piccolomini would result, it was said, in the reduction of the numbers of the Monte dei Gentiluomini by between a quarter and a third, so the share of the offices the nobles had held before Pius elected was to be cut *pro rata*. One minor concession was offered in that all the Gentiluomini holding office at that moment, except castellans, were to serve out their term.⁵⁵

Cardinal Francesco and his brothers Andrea and Jacopo would play a significant role in the government of Siena in the 1480s and 1490s. The cardinal would be called on to arbitrate among the *monti* at times of high tension and confusion, and he provided advice and support for the Sienese in Rome. He did not approve of much that was done, and his exhortations to peace and unity often fell on deaf ears, but he continued to take great interest in how Siena was governed. At one point in 1493 he and his brothers put themselves at the head of those who were resisting the decline of the institutions of popular government in Siena, but they were out-manoeuvred by the oligarchical group who had taken a dominant role.⁵⁶ Cardinal Francesco was perhaps more respected than influential; his brother Andrea was very influential, as well as highly respected. He became a leading figure in the Monte del Popolo, a force for moderation. Neither he nor his brother Jacopo, who was frequently away from Siena on his lands in the Marches of the Papal States, showed any inclination to exploit their popularity to try to establish some kind of lordship over the city.

The Monte dei Gentiluomini would be readmitted to the government in 1480.⁵⁷ Although there were some signs of lingering hostility to them, on the whole they were integrated into the *reggimento* without marked difficulty. Some of them may have nursed dreams of a more elevated role. 'We gentlemen are biding our time, and cannot show our mind—and yet we hope to return one day to the old ways and our ancient government.'⁵⁸ This day did not come;

⁵⁵ ASS, Concistoro 589, ff. 31v–33r.

⁵⁶ See below, pp. 113–4.

⁵⁷ See below, pp. 59–60.

⁵⁸ 'con speranza di tornare un dì nelle chose et ghoverno nostro anticho': ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1263: Giovanni Malavolti to Lodovico Sforza, 4 June 1495, Siena.

nor did any Gentiluomini appear to have tried to make these dreams reality. Disruption and violence and changes in the regime there were in abundance but they were caused by conflict between the members of the other monti, not by the Gentiluomini trying to claim a privileged position for themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

RADICAL POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND ITS DISCONTENTS

In the mid-1480s, Siena came to be governed by one of the most self-consciously popular regimes of any Italian city in the fifteenth century, despite the integration of the *Gentiluomini* (and the *Dodici*) into the *reggimento*. Not only did the Monte del Popolo become the dominant monte in the regime, but there were deliberate efforts to bring into the *reggimento* members of the *popolo minuto*, and whole categories of offices were reserved for them. This radical regime was not brought about by the agitation of those frustrated by their exclusion from political power and its fruits, nor by despair at economic hardship. It was rather an instance of a classic alliance of ambitious members of the political elite and men whose main political assets were a propensity for street violence and an eye for plunder. Nevertheless, the *popolo minuto* took to the streets on occasion during the 1480s not just to forward their own interests, but as defenders of public order and of the institutions of popular government against those bringing violence to the streets of Siena in pursuit of feuds with political rivals. It was such divisions and quarrels among members of the *reggimento* that brought about the repeated appointment of Balie, which came to be regarded as almost a routine, stable part of the structure of government. All the regimes during these turbulent years made use of Balie, including the radical *popolare* regime. At the root of all these upheavals and the fundamental changes they brought to the political institutions of Siena, were the antagonisms generated by the events of the mid-1450s, and the exiles and political proscriptions that had followed.

The problems began as the Pazzi War waged by King Ferrante of Naples and Pope Sixtus IV against Florence in 1478–9 came to an end. Siena had been a willing ally of the Neapolitan king, and Siennese territory had been a useful base for Ferrante's son, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, and his army. After hostilities ended, Alfonso had stayed with his troops in Siennese territory. With them were a number of Siennese exiles, survivors or descendants of those banished in

1456–8. The duke brought turmoil to the political life of Siena by insisting on the restoration and rehabilitation of the exiles and of those who had been ‘ammoniti’, excluded from political office. When requests for their restoration were put to the Sienese on behalf of Alfonso and Ferrante, there was stiff opposition in the councils. This opposition was centred on the Monte dei Riformatori and, consequently, Alfonso became involved in their deposition from the *reggimento*.

From early on, the Riformatori had been identified by at least some of the conspirators as being principally responsible for their disgrace. In May 1457 Antonio Petrucci had dreamed of returning to Siena, expelling all the Riformatori and bringing the Gentiluomini and Dodici into the government in their place.¹ But the prosecution of the conspirators had not been a crusade by the Riformatori. Some Riformatori were themselves among the conspirators, and members of the other monti were just as zealous in the prosecution. The most likely explanation for the fixing of the blame on the Riformatori was the decisive role played by Cristofano Gabrielli. He had died in 1472, but it is possible that his brother Francesco—who together with his sons and the sons of Cristofano would be treated harshly when their monte was expelled from the government²—kept the memory of what Cristofano had done present to the minds of his fellow Riformatori and stimulated their resistance to Alfonso’s requests.

The prime movers against the Riformatori seem to have been Noveschi, and it would be the Noveschi who would be considered the principal beneficiaries of the new order, and who would be held responsible to the Riformatori when they returned. Crowds of Noveschi with some Popolari took to the streets on the night of 20–21 June 1480, shouting out before the houses of the Riformatori that they should leave the city or they would be killed. The following night a larger crowd, including several hundred Neapolitan infantry who had been sent to Siena by Alfonso that day, menaced the Riformatori.³ Towards dawn, the armed men who had been circulating through the city collected in the Campo, and a deputation entered the palace to urge the Concistoro to summon a Council of the People. The

¹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 269: Copy of a letter ‘da uno che sta in Napoli scripta ad uno del collegio di Balìa’, 29 May 1457, Naples.

² Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, pp. 76, 89–90.

³ See Christine Shaw, ‘Politics and institutional innovation in Siena 1480–1498’, *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 103 (1996), pp. 16–19, for these events and the conflicting accounts of them.

Council that assembled was said to be of Noveschi and Popolari only. Many were armed. Some stood guard at the door keeping out those considered unfavourable.⁴ The Captain of the People, Jacopo Piccolomini, put to them a *proposta generale* asking for suggestions as to what should be done to preserve Siena's liberty, renew the government and avoid disorder. Borghese Borghesi, a Novesco, proposed that all the Riformatori and their descendants in the male line should be expelled from the *reggimento* and that a Balìa of ten Popolari and ten Noveschi should be appointed with full powers for six months. This proposal was seconded by Francesco del Marretta, a Popolare, and agreed by the Council by 441 votes to one.⁵ Clearly, the meeting gave legal sanction to a decision that had been reached beforehand by leading Noveschi and Popolari. There were rumours that the Riformatori—estimated to number 450 men, in 70 families—were not only to be excluded from the government, but to be expelled en masse from the city.⁶ While this did not happen, over a hundred Riformatori were sent into exile. About a dozen Popolari were also exiled, and two Noveschi.⁷

The deposition of the Riformatori was only one aspect of the new regime. As Alfonso himself recounted, 'all the Gentiluomini and all the exiles, ammoniti and those who had been rebels in the time of . . . King Alfonso, our grandfather' had been brought into it.⁸ It may well have been Alfonso who was responsible for the admission of the Gentiluomini on 22 June. The official reasons given in the records of the Balìa—and the fact that six of the twenty members of the Balìa voted against the measure, despite Alfonso's support for it—signal a less than whole-hearted desire to welcome the Gentiluomini. Because the Riformatori, together with the Dodici, might plot against

⁴ Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 275–6; Vincenza Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese sulla crisi degli anni Ottanta', *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: politica, economia, cultura, arte* (Pisa, 1996), III, p. 1115.

⁵ ASS, Consiglio Generale, ff. 175v–176r. Borghese Borghesi was the son of Agostino, one of those the conspirators had planned to assassinate in 1456, and had no obvious personal motive to identify with the exiles and ammoniti, although he had spent several months in Calabria's camp as a commissioner in 1479. Why Francesco del Marretta should have been the seconder of the motion is not clear.

⁶ ASMo, ASE, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Firenze, b. 2: copy of Luigi Gianfigliuzzi to Bongianni Gianfigliuzzi, 24 June 1480, Siena.

⁷ Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, pp. 42–3.

⁸ ASMo, ASE, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Firenze, b. 2: copy Alfonso to Marino Tomacelli, 23 June 1480, Siena.

the *reggimento* with the Gentiluomini, these ran, and because the Gentiluomini had always behaved well and modestly, they were to be admitted to the Council of the People, and all the Gentiluomini resident in the city were to be eligible for all the offices of the republic. Forty-one of them were to be given the status of *riseduti* immediately.⁹

The Gentiluomini, the returned exiles and former *ammoniti*, and about a hundred Noveschi and Popolari added to the Council of the People to 'strengthen' the *reggimento*¹⁰—were to form a new third monte, together with a few Dodici admitted to the *reggimento* at the request of Pope Sixtus, and a handful of Riformatori restored to it at the request of Alfonso.¹¹ The new monte was formed with his advice; he claimed that he could put into it whom he pleased, and that it was to be called Monte Alfonsino in his honour.¹² It was in fact called the Monte degli Aggregati, supposedly at his suggestion.¹³ Its constitution was a lengthy business, and there is no record confirming its final form.

The Monte degli Aggregati was unpopular from the start. Popolari felt that there were a disproportionate number of Noveschi in it, giving them too large a share of offices overall, while some Noveschi, especially among the former exiles and *ammoniti*, famished for office resented having to share with the Gentiluomini.¹⁴ Associated as the new monte was at its inception with Alfonso, the fact that Neapolitan influence, so strong during the formation of the new regime, rapidly waned after Alfonso left Siena in early August did not help it to become accepted. Outright resentment and hostility to Alfonso and his father built up in 1481 as Ferrante pressed the Sieneſe to agree to restore to Florence lands which had been taken during the Pazzi War. While some of the principal citizens were aware of the political advantages of complying with these insistent requests, the *popolo* in general were strongly opposed. Many Sieneſe felt that Ferrante

⁹ ASS, Balia 20, f. 6r.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 2v–5v.

¹¹ Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, III, f. 78r; Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 103 (1996), pp. 27–8.

¹² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1198: Gianfilippo Salarolo to Filippo [Sacromoro?], 4 Aug. 1480, Siena.

¹³ ASS, Balia 20, f. 61v.

¹⁴ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', pp. 1116–7.

had gone back on his word to them, and their resentment at what they regarded as betrayal came to be directed against those seen as associated with him and Alfonso, including the advocates of a Neapolitan alliance, and the Gentiluomini.¹⁵

This provided an opportunity for Noveschi who were rivals of the Neapolitan faction to court the Popolari by accusing their rivals and the Gentiluomini of being ready to sell the disputed lands back to Florence. They took up the cause of the Popolari who had been exiled with the Riformatori, and the issue of the removal of the names of some Popolari from the electoral purses by the Balìa, who had been given powers to do this secretly on 20 July 1480.¹⁶ They arranged for arms to be bought in to distribute them among their supporters—although, one diarist noted, the Sienese *popolo* ‘had not been accustomed for a very long time to be armed or to raise riots’. Meanwhile, Antonio Bellanti, the leader of the Neapolitan faction, was also cultivating both the leaders of the Monte del Popolo and the *popolo minuto*.¹⁷ In bringing the *popolo minuto* into play in this way, both factions of the Noveschi were playing what would prove to be a dangerous game for them.

The discovery of a plot in March 1482 to raise a crowd of armed ‘plebeians’, kill two or three Gentiluomini, and then march on the Palace of the Signoria to force the Concistoro and Council of the People to agree to their demands, brought down stern reproofs on the leader of the anti-Neapolitan faction, Cino Cinughi, and his allies. News of the trouble reached Cardinal Piccolomini in Rome; the Concistoro wrote to assure him that the affair had proved to be of little consequence, and that the Gentiluomini suffered no discrimination.¹⁸ Cino Cinughi was a Novesco, an ambitious man who had obtained a special exemption allowing him to hold temporal offices after he had been made rector of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. His official residence was the gathering place for his allies and their supporters, who included Borghese Borghesi, seemingly dissatisfied with the regime he had helped to bring about, and

¹⁵ Shaw, ‘Politics and institutional innovation’, 103 (1996), pp. 28–30, 36–9, 45–6.

¹⁶ ASS, Balìa 20, f. 39r; Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, pp. 1116–8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1118–21.

¹⁸ ASS, Concistoro 1695, ff. 58v–59r; Shaw, ‘Politics and institutional innovation’, 103 (1996), pp. 41–4.

Francesco del Marretta, who was particularly opposed to the incorporation of the Gentiluomini. Among the other Popolari frequenting Cino Cinughi were some who would be leaders of the radical Popolare regime, including Paolo di Gherardo, Crescenzo Gori and the man who would emerge as the single most powerful figure, Cristofano di Guidoccio Gionta.¹⁹

Several of these men would play an important role at the start, on 7 June 1482, of the period of unrest that would result in the institution of that regime. Francesco del Marretta was the Captain of the People; one diarist recorded an unsuccessful proposal that he put before the Council of the People for the recall of the Popolari exiles as being the spur to the arrival of an armed crowd in the Campo before the Palace of the Signoria.²⁰ Standing at one of the entrances to the Campo, Cristofano Gionta put his hood down, which was the signal for the 'plebeian' leaders of the crowd to shut their shops and come out on the Campo with weapons beneath their cloaks.²¹ It was Borghese Borghesi who made the composite proposal to which the Council, mindful of the waiting crowd, agreed. The most significant element in this was the abolition of the Monte degli Aggregati. The Gentiluomini should be assigned some portion of the *reggimento* for themselves, and the other members should return to their original monti. Cardinal Piccolomini was to decide what part the Gentiluomini should have.²²

Cino Cinughi, Cristofano Gionta and their associates again used pressure from a crowd they had raised on 10 June, to impose the appointment of a Balìa of eighteen Noveschi and eighteen Popolari of their choice. This time it was not the Council of the People they were coercing, but the Concistoro, the Nine of Ward and forty-six citizens who happened to be in the Palace at the time and who were associated with the decision on the advice of lawyers, because of the irregularity of a Balìa not being appointed by the usual councils.²³ Its composition displeased a number of some leading

¹⁹ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', pp. 1117–8.

²⁰ ASS, MS D58, 'Diario senese', f. 36r–v.

²¹ Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 292.

²² ASS, Concistoro 694, ff. 22v–24r; Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', pp. 1121–2.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1123; ASS, Concistoro 1695, f. 105v: Concistoro to Sienese ambassadors in Rome, 10 June 1482. This letter from the Concistoro mentions the list

Popolari because some of those included were not of sufficient weight or experience to be usual candidates for appointment to a Balìa, and it displeased many of the *popolo* because some of their favourites in the *reggimento* had been left out. To meet these criticisms, the Balìa's first act was to co-opt fourteen new members. Among them was Antonio Bellanti, a conspicuous absentee from the original list, together with the other men most closely associated with the Neapolitan alliance.²⁴ They followed this by granting debt relief to poorer members of the Monti del Popolo and dei Nove, and those who had taken up arms in the past few days were awarded tax exemptions and priority for the next two years in appointments to vicariates and castellanies.²⁵

Still undecided was the question of what part the Gentiluomini were to have in the regime. The mob on 7 June had demanded that they be removed from the government for offences 'against the *popolari* and especially the *popolo minuto*',²⁶ and on 13 June there was another crowd of *popolari* threatening to use force if the Gentiluomini were not deposed for 'the intolerable behaviour of some of them'.²⁷ Cardinal Piccolomini, who had been given the task of reforming the *reggimento*, declined to take responsibility for this, so the decision was taken by the Balìa that all Gentiluomini, except for the Piccolomini, should be barred from office.²⁸ The next assembly of armed men to menace the beleaguered officials in the Palace, on 15 June, demanded the admission of all Riformatori and Dodici to the regime. Members of these *monti* were conspicuous among the throng, which could not be persuaded to leave until Cardinal Piccolomini had been given the power to admit to the *reggimento* any of the Riformatori, Dodici and Gentiluomini that he chose, except for exiles.²⁹ His list, sent to the

of members that had been handed to them, unlike the official record in the deliberations of the Concistoro, which refers only to the desire to quieten the mob. (Concistoro 694, f. 25r.)

²⁴ See Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 103 (1996), pp. 51–2, for an analysis of the composition of this Balìa.

²⁵ ASS, Balìa 26, f. 2v.

²⁶ Cristoforo Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese (1479–1483)*, ed. A. Lisini and F. Jacometti, *RR.II.SS.*, 15, Part VI (Bologna, 1939), p. 895.

²⁷ ASS, Concistoro 1695, f. 107v: Concistoro to Sienese ambassadors in Rome, 15 June 1482.

²⁸ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 103 (1996), pp. 53–4; Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 898–9.

²⁹ ASS, Concistoro 1695, f. 107v: Concistoro to Sienese ambassadors in Rome, 15 June 1482.

Balia on 19 June, included several hundred names.³⁰ It was accepted, so that in this way not only did the exclusion of the Gentiluomini last for only a few days, but the Dodici now formed part of the *reggimento* for the first time (except for a few individuals) since 1403.

The crowd that gathered in the Campo on 15 June had differed from its predecessors in another respect. There had been fighting between some Noveschi led by Luzio Bellanti, and some *popolari* led by Giovanni and Francesco Severini,³¹ and Giovanni del Balestriere, who was mortally wounded by Bellanti.³² Intervention by leading Noveschi and Popolari and the prompt arrest of Luzio Bellanti helped forestall further trouble. By this point, the distinction between the Neapolitan partisans and their opponents among the Noveschi was becoming less marked. Nevertheless, mutual distrust and conflicting ambitions prevented the Noveschi from uniting and weakened their position. They were afforded some protection by leading Popolari; but there were indications of a growing rift between the Popolari and the Noveschi. Cino Cinughi and the other Noveschi seemed to be losing control of their allies among the *popolo* to the Popolari. When Cino Cinughi was chosen to be Captain of the People at the end of June,³³ he was not allowed to hold the keys of the city gates, as his Popolare predecessor Francesco del Marretta had been.³⁴ Seizing one of the gates of the city and then bringing in troops in Siense pay to fight for them was the foundation of the plans of those Noveschi who were hoping to take the initiative against their enemies. Their plans became known, and on the night of 12 July the official companies of the *popolo* gathered and patrolled their respective terzi. Apparently this was not done on the orders of the government, and during the day Cardinal Piccolomini and other citizens persuaded the *popolo* and some of the Nove to disarm. Other Noveschi did not, and there were skirmishes as some Petrucci tried to make their way to the Terzo di Camollia. In that terzo, where the infantry constable Prospero da Canale and his men had been brought to the

³⁰ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 900–8.

³¹ They were the sons of Niccolò di Nanni Severini, one of the foremost members of the *reggimento* from the 1450s to 1480, and had both just returned from exile.

³² Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1125.

³³ He was chosen by the Balia.

³⁴ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1127.

city to support the Nove, the *popolo* routed those Noveschi who took up arms, and to celebrate their triumph went to the Palace and hung the standard of the *popolo* from the windows.³⁵

According to one diarist, on 12 July there was 'a council of *popolari*' in the church of Sant' Agostino, who agreed to ask the Balìa that 'the rest of the rebels' should return. The Balìa temporized all day, until the *popolari* told them 'if you don't do it, we will'.³⁶ After the fighting on 13 July, the Balìa met and decided that the Riformatori exiles were to be allowed back. They also decided that 'because of all that has happened in the city of Siena up to this day, and the will of the whole *popolo* of the city of Siena', and so that they could live in peace, there should be a third government monte again. This was to be arranged by Cardinal Piccolomini and six citizens, who were to choose which of the Gentiluomini and Dodici should join all the Riformatori in this monte.³⁷

Once again, however, the cardinal was not to be left to complete the task he had been given. After stipulating a few days later that all the decisions of the cardinal and his colleagues should be subject to their approval, on 20 July the Balìa decreed, without any reference to the commission, that all the Gentiluomini the Cardinal had included in his list on 19 June were to join the Monte dei Nove, and all the Dodici were to join the revived Monte dei Riformatori.³⁸ This would leave the Monte del Popolo with a bigger share in the *reggimento* than the Nove and Riformatori would have, but a week later, on 27 July, they were to be given a still greater advantage. An extra prior was to be added to the Concistoro, so that henceforth there would be four Popolari priors, and three each from the other two government monti. The new electoral purse was to include 24 men who were not *riseduti*, and who had no relatives who had ever been *riseduti*; these men were to be chosen by the Balìa in a scrutiny of all the *popolari minuti*, and twelve of them were to join the Council of the People at once. There were to be about a hundred

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1128–31 (misdated to 6 July); Allegretto Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi del suo tempo', *RIS*, 23 (1733), cols 809–10; Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 908–9.

³⁶ 'se voi non farete voi, noi farem noi': 'Diario senese', f. 37r.

³⁷ If it would be too big, the Dodici were to be divided among all three monti. (ASS, Balìa 26, f. 35r–v.)

³⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 45r.

other additions to the council, Popolari, Dodici and Riformatori. Cardinal Piccolomini had already been allowed to nominate fifteen Gentiluomini to join the Council of the People, as a gesture of gratitude for his efforts.³⁹

Not everyone was yet satisfied: some citizens came to the Balìa with a list of fifty more men they wished to join the Council of the People, complaining that many who had endured difficulties and dangers, some sword in hand, for the public good had been passed over, while others who had done nothing had been rewarded. Despite the threat of further riots, this time the Balìa stood firm and refused. But once again there were armed *popolari* gathered in the streets when on 5 August the Balìa, 'because of the threat of popular tumult', proposed to the Council of the People that a new Balìa should be appointed. The Balìa elected in the Council of the People on 6 August had 60 members, 24 from the Monte del Popolo and eighteen each from the government Monti dei Nove and Riformatori.⁴⁰ The extra Popolari were, one of the Balìa's notaries wrote in his diary, 'to show gratitude to the *popolo* and to demonstrate that everyone recognizes their role in establishing the government and *reggimento*, as the victors of all'.⁴¹

By this time, the Monte dei Nove had lost a lot of ground. The recourse to arms by some of their number had discredited them, and their failure had demoralized them. While the Riformatori were obviously in a far better position than they had been before June—their exiles were restored and their Monte was back in the *reggimento*—they had not recovered the position they had enjoyed for nearly eighty years. Their share of offices had to be divided with the Dodici. But it was recovery of lost property and lost income and revenge on their Noveschi enemies that preoccupied many Riformatori at this time, and they seem to have been prepared to acquiesce in the advantage enjoyed by the Monte del Popolo, provided their demands for reparations were accepted. The Gentiluomini and the Dodici were in no position to challenge the Popolari. Cardinal

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 46r, 53v–54v.

⁴⁰ ASS, Balìa 403, ff. 21v–22v.

⁴¹ 'per dimostrare gratitudine al popolo et dimostrare, che da loro riconosceva ciascuno lo stato et el reggimento come vincitore del tutto'. Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 914.

Piccolomini's influence could go some way in protecting the Gentiluomini, but keeping a low profile and not antagonizing the other *monti* by claiming any more than they were prepared to allow was the best way for the Gentiluomini to avoid being expelled from the *reggimento* again. After so many years of ostracism, the entry of the Dodici into the *reggimento* had been remarkably uncontroversial. They made a collection among themselves to tip the staff of the palace: the diarist Allegretto Allegretti noted that he contributed four lire to this, and paid another five lire and ten soldi for a pair of stockings with his device on them, which he gave when he first entered the Council of the People in August.⁴² The Dodici caused no trouble, and none of the other *monti* thought it worth their while to try to have them expelled again.

To some degree the Monte del Popolo had a claim on the gratitude of the Dodici, the Gentiluomini and the Riformatori. Their claim to pre-eminence in the *reggimento*—they had been given formal precedence over the other *monti* at the same time as they had been allotted an extra seat in the Concistoro on 27 July—was attributed to their benevolence in bringing peace back to the city.⁴³ It was not attributed to the dramatic role that armed *popolari* had played on several occasions. It could scarcely be expected that government notaries would make this link in the official records they kept, but it was not made in any of the extant diaries either.

Working out who exactly were the protagonists of these dramatic eruptions of 'il popolo' into Sienese political life is not an easy task. Fortunately, there are several surviving contemporary accounts of the events of the summer of 1482, a rare occurrence for fifteenth-century Siena. Nevertheless, it would have been difficult even for contemporaries to be sure of the precise composition of each of the crowds that came together to put their demands to the government, or to be sure who had formulated those demands. They could hardly be blamed for turning to the convenient term, 'il popolo', with its multiplicity of meanings. If they wanted to be more specific, they could employ a variety of terms to distinguish different social and political groups. They referred to the 'popolo minuto' or 'il plebe' (the plebeians)—terms not necessarily used to imply disdain, but

⁴² Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 810.

⁴³ ASS, Balia 26, f. 53v.

clearly intended to distinguish that particular group from the political elite. The *popolo* massed in the Campo could be distinguished from the 'cittadini', the citizens meeting in the councils and conclaves in the Palace (although many of those in the Campo would legally be Sieneze citizens as well). The term 'Popolari reggenti' provides a welcome indication that the writer is referring to members of the Monte del Popolo: all too often it is not clear whether a reference to 'popolari' is to members of the Monte alone, or has a more general meaning.

Four different accounts of the events of 10 June illustrate the problems of interpretation they present. Allegretti stated simply that 'the *popolo* took arms, and they made the Council assemble, and they made a new Balia'.⁴⁴ An anonymous diarist—who does not seem to have been a *riseduto*—described how 'the city rose up [si levò a romore la città] crying "viva il populo" and the citizens met in the Palace', and how 'the Nove came to an agreement with the Popolo and they armed themselves and came to the Palace and made the Balia and then they cried "viva il Popolo e Nove e buoni"'.⁴⁵ Here it is evident from a comparison with other sources that the Popolo who came to an agreement with the Nove should be read as the Monte del Popolo. The view from the Palace, as recorded in the diary of the notary of the Balia, Cantoni, was that while the 'citizens' were disputing whether or not to appoint a Balia and decided to put a proposal before a Council of the People, as 'it did not appear to the *popolo*' that a Balia would be appointed in this way, 'all Siena took arms, coming to the Palace and demanding a Balia'. The list of 36 names for the Balia was given to the Concistoro by 'some *popolari* citizens'; the acceptance of this list 'somewhat pacified the *popolo*, which was armed in the *piazza*'.⁴⁶ Another diarist with some inside knowledge of the divisions among the political elite gives the name of one of the group of '*popolari* citizens' who handed in the list—Bindo, that is, Bindo di Giovanni di Ser Minoccio, who was a member of the Monte del Popolo. According to this diarist, Bindo told the Concistoro that 'this *popolo*' had taken arms because they wanted a Balia, and if the men on the list were not appointed

⁴⁴ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 809.

⁴⁵ 'Diario senese', ff. 36v–37r.

⁴⁶ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 895–6.

to this Balìa, there would be trouble with 'this armed *plebe*'. Among those he records as being with the crowd, armed and on horseback, were two leading Noveschi, Cino Cinughi and Sozzino Bellarmati. When the *plebe* began to threaten some Noveschi and Gentiluomini, 'some of those heads of the *popolo* [or should that be 'Popolo?'] who were mounted and armed' went to fetch two of the threatened Noveschi, Achille and Antonio Bellanti, and rode around the city with them, 'and the *plebe* began to cry "Popolo and Nove"'. Antonio Bellanti turned to the *plebe* and said 'Just shout *popolo*, because I am of the *popolo*.'⁴⁷

These four descriptions of just one day include the whole gamut of the meanings attached to the word *popolo* in fifteenth-century Siena from the anonymous crowd to a reminder, in Antonio Bellanti's remark, that all the *monti* of Siena, except the Gentiluomini, were *popolari*, not nobles. In some instances it is only possible to make an educated guess at what a writer intended to convey by his use of the term. Yet for all these complexities, if the sources are read carefully and attention is paid to the different ways in which the terms *popolo* and *popolari* are used, it is possible to detect the differing composition of the various crowds, to see how the *popolo minuto* became a protagonist in Siennese political life in the 1480s, and to understand something of the connection between the influence of the *popolo* in arms and the predominance achieved by the Monte del Popolo.

It was the malcontents gathered around Cino Cinughi who initially encouraged the *popolo minuto* to take up arms, seeking to use this support to further their own political agenda. This group provided the stimulus and the leadership for the first crowds to head for the Campo on 7 and 10 June. Appeasing popular tumult was used as a justification in the official records for the abolition of the Monte degli Aggregati on 7 June and the extraordinary procedure by which the Balìa was appointed on 10 June.⁴⁸ One speaker, probably Cardinal Piccolomini, reproved the Council of the People on 7 June for allowing the *popolo minuto* to impose their will on the government.⁴⁹ Indeed those excluded from the political elite quickly

⁴⁷ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', pp. 1123–4.

⁴⁸ ASS, Concistoro 694, ff. 23r, 25r.

⁴⁹ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1121. For Cardinal Piccolomini's role in the events of that day, see Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 894–5.

realized the power they could exert, and the legitimacy that could be given to their demands by their identification as the *popolo*. They celebrated the decision to allow the Noveschi and Popolari exiles back by carrying through the city 'lo stendardo del popolo', the banner with the red lion usually associated with the Captain of the People.⁵⁰

There are indications that the official bodies of the *popolo* in arms, the companies organized in each district of the city, were soon taking a role. Rumours that Florentine troops were at the gates—perhaps put about intentionally—brought the *popolo* on to the streets again on 15 June. The group of *popolari* that confronted Luzio Bellanti and his companions in the Campo may have been such a company. Giovanni del Balestriere, the man who was mortally wounded, was described as 'one of the heads of the *popolo* of Ponte and San Maurizio, terzo of San Martino'.⁵¹ The outcry caused by his death (with the *plebe* calling for revenge and the companies assembling),⁵² and the official compensation given to his family⁵³ becomes more understandable if Giovanni had been acting in an official capacity. When rumours that the Nove were planning to make use of support from outside Siena caused companies to patrol their terzi in early July, they included members of the other monti. Allegretto Allegretti recorded how he was one of the Popolari, Dodici and Riformatori of the Terzo di Camollia who gathered at the house of the gonfaloniere Conte Capacci in the evening of 12 July. After patrolling their terzo they went home to sleep, meeting to hear mass in San Pietro Ovale next morning before assembling in the street of Arco dei Rossi; 'and the other terzi did the same'.⁵⁴ At least some of the *popolari* who fought the Nove on 13 July may have been organized in their companies. They showed more co-ordination and determination than a randomly-assembled mob could do, and the Nove

⁵⁰ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 895.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 899.

⁵² Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1126.

⁵³ All his sons and those of his brother Mariano were to be made members of the Council of the People when they reached the age of twenty, and all his daughters were to be given dowries, while his brother Mariano—who was a member of the Balìa at the time—was given the office of podestà of Asciano for six months. (ASS, Balìa 26, ff. 10v, 13r.)

⁵⁴ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 809–10.

bringing in professional infantry to fight on their behalf—infantry that were supposed to be in the service of the city—would give the companies reason enough to oppose them. After the Nove in the Terzo di Camollia surrendered their weapons ‘to the *popolo*’, everyone went to the Palace and the standard of the *popolo* was displayed from the windows ‘in token of such a victory’.⁵⁵

Whether or not they were organized in their companies, there is no sign on this occasion that the *popolo* were being used by members of the political elite to fight their battles for them. Nor were some members of the *popolo minuto* content to limit their intervention in public life to participation in a crowd, brandishing weapons. In late July, ‘the plebeians, at the instigation of certain men’, held assemblies in several churches, and sent a deputation to the Balìa to demand that ‘one of these plebeians’ should be included in every Concistoro. Like the *popolari* who had met in Sant’ Agostino on 12 July and insisted on the return of the exiles, they were not prepared to be put off. When the Balìa decided that only members of the *popolo minuto* should hold certain offices in Sienese territory for the next six years they were not satisfied, and the Balìa held a scrutiny to add twenty-four *popolari minuti* to the electoral purses for the Concistoro.⁵⁶ Those they chose, an analysis of their background reveals, were generally prosperous but not rich men, who were or had been merchants or artisans and had some property in the territory, usually acquired quite recently.⁵⁷

It was ‘some of the plebeians of the other monti’, according to Cantoni, who pressed for Antonio Bellanti to be arrested in early August, because they were concerned that some of the Noveschi might cause trouble.⁵⁸ Bellanti, however, had plenty of enemies among the political elite, even within his own monte. The Balìa decided he should be put in the fortress of Montalcino—for his own safety, they said, as well as for the public good.⁵⁹ Three other Noveschi, Benedetto

⁵⁵ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 909.

⁵⁶ Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, p. 1134. Unfortunately, there are no clues to the identity of those who organized these meetings in churches.

⁵⁷ Anne Katherine Isaacs, ‘Cardinali e “Spalagrembi”’. Sulla vita politica a Siena fra il 1480 e il 1487’, in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: politica, economia, cultura, arte* (Pisa, 1996), III, p. 1038.

⁵⁸ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 916.

⁵⁹ ASS, Balìa 26, f. 68v; Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, pp. 1133–4.

Martinozzi, Placido Placidi and Leonardo Gucci were also imprisoned in fortresses outside Siena. Proposals for compensation for those who had been fined or exiled (or both) failed repeatedly in the Council of the People, blocked, it was believed, by the Nove. The deadlock was broken by the Monte del Popolo. After several meetings, they held 'a Council of the People of Popolari only' on 10 October. This decided, with only one dissenting voice among 160 councillors, that 12,000 ducats should be raised from those considered culpable, and a further 2,000 ducats from the Gentiluomini, since they were considered partially responsible for the persecution of the Riformatori. The Balìa agreed to these provisions two days later.⁶⁰

At the end of October, the Campo was again filled by armed crowds, making demands in the name of the *popolo*. In a debate in the Council of the People on 28 October about whether a new Balìa should be elected with full powers or should be forbidden to punish citizens, those who wanted a Balìa with powers to impose further penalties on the Nove left the hall in indignation when they could not get their own way. That night they roamed the streets with their weapons, threatening the Nove and the Popolari who sympathized with the Nove—or to take the air and for the security of the city, depending on the point of view of the observer.⁶¹

The next day an armed crowd of Riformatori, with some Popolari, Dodici and *popolari minuti*, filled the Campo crying 'Popolo, popolo', and many entered the Palace. There were reports that they had taken over the Palace and were demanding a government of their own choosing. Four men—at least three of them, Crescenzo Gori, Matteo Pannilini and Alessandro Martini, Popolari, the fourth, Antonio di Monna Landa, possibly so—presented a demand for the appointment of a Balìa of twenty Popolari only, with a list of those they wanted appointed, to a council of 120 Popolari *riseduti* which had met in the Palace. When the council rejected this, the four men with those who favoured their demands left the hall, uttering menaces. An attempt to storm back into the Palace was thwarted by an official who closed the iron gate on the stairs. Intimidated, the council reluc-

⁶⁰ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 920–1; ASS, Balìa 26, ff. 116v–117v.

⁶¹ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 922; Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1136.

tantly agreed to the appointment of the Balìa, and the Palace bells were rung 'to demonstrate to the plebeians that the *reggimento* was not disunited.'⁶² Again the houses of some Noveschi and of the Popolari Francesco del Marretta and his brother Girolamo were assaulted, but then heavy rain dispersed the mob.

But the *popolo minuto* did not approve of what had been done. As they went about their business in the morning they grumbled to one another, and soon gathered in force in the Campo, calling for the revocation of what had been agreed the day before. Riformatori who tried to join them were driven away. The crowd demanded the release of the del Marretta brothers, who had been brought to the Palace. Once reassured the crowd meant them no harm, the brothers went outside and were put on horseback. They and other leading Popolari, including Alberto Aringhieri, Paolo di Gherardo and Andrea Piccolomini, rode around and 'took all the city under the protection of the *popolo* and in the name of the Popolari'.⁶³ Another council of Popolari *riseduti* met in the Palace, revoked the forced decision of the day before and agreed to elect a new Balìa of Popolari for two months. They also agreed that the Monte del Popolo should formally assume the role of peacemaker between the Nove and Riformatori. As a perpetual reminder that on this day, the feast of San Savino, one of the patron saints of Siena, 'the whole city was pacified with great honour and triumph by the Monte del Popolo', a palio was to be run on the anniversary 'to the glory of God and the Virgin and to the honour and glory of the present popular government and the Monte del Popolo'.⁶⁴

The new Balìa decreed that the keys to the city gates should be held by Popolari and appointed nine Popolari to have charge of security in the city. Only those they authorized were to carry arms and there were to be no further unofficial meetings to discuss political affairs.⁶⁵ In order to emphasize that there had been no *coup d'état* by the Monte del Popolo, the Balìa decided to seek confirmation of their authority from a properly-constituted Council of the People,

⁶² Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1138.

⁶³ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 923.

⁶⁴ ASS, Balìa 26, ff. 128r–129r. The palio was then, as now, a fiercely competitive horse race.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 131r, 132r; Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 925.

and that there should be a solemn oath to be taken by all the *riseduti* to reinforce the pacification of the city. On 6 November, the Council of the People, after ratifying the Balia's appointment by 387 votes to three, approved the suggested ceremony. A mass of the Holy Spirit was sung, and the councillors addressed on the virtues of peace, first by a preacher and then by a lawyer. With their hand on a figure of the Crucified Christ in a missal, all the Nove and *Riformatori* swore to put aside all enmities between them, and the *Popolari* swore to uphold the peace, taking the part of whichever *monte* was attacked by the other. They all swore not to conspire or plot against the 'present *reggimento* of three *monti*, newly installed and established'. Anyone breaking the oath would be regarded as having 'incurred the indignation of God and of the Holy Trinity and of all the court of Paradise', as being 'in the hands of the devil', subject to the maledictions God had decreed for traitors, and to the earthly penalties decreed against seditious and pestilential citizens who disturbed peaceful government. Having taken the oath, the entire council processed to the cathedral, three by three, a *Popolare* walking between a *Novesco* and a *Riformatore*, to pray together and hear a solemn *Te Deum*, before returning to the Palace while all the bells were rung for joy. All those *riseduti* who had not been present and the members of the General Council were to take the oath. A fortnight later, the Balia decreed that all the *popolo minuto* were to take a similar oath.⁶⁶ 'All the men of Siena' were summoned to the Palace chapel to swear on a missal that they would not take part in any tumult, or take up arms at the behest of any citizen but only on the orders of the government, and that no one should oppose the regime. If anyone broke the oath, the devil would take his soul.⁶⁷ The terrible maledictions to be called down on those who transgressed the oath made a great impression on the Sieneese, but one diarist at least considered it to be very perilous to their souls and 'unworthy of grave and mature government, considering especially the nature of such party hatreds and dissensions.'⁶⁸

⁶⁶ ASS, Concistoro 697, ff. 4v–7v; Balia 26, f. 153r.

⁶⁷ 'Diario senese', f. 39r.

⁶⁸ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1142. See Christine Shaw, 'Peace-making rituals in fifteenth-century Siena', in Philippa Jackson and Fabrizio Nevola (eds), *Beyond the Palio: Urban Ritual in Renaissance Siena* (Oxford, 2006).

The inclusion of the *popolo minuto* in such a solemn political oath indicated the degree to which they had come to play a part in Sienese political life. When the new electoral purses necessitated by the change in regime were compiled, arrangements were made to introduce more of the *popolo minuto*. Two separate purses were to be compiled for castellans, one of *riseduti* and their relatives, and one of men whose family had never had a *riseduto*—‘*spalagrembi*’, as they were known.⁶⁹ There were to be two castellans for each fortress at any time, one from each purse.⁷⁰ In January 1483, the Council of the People agreed that for the next four years only members of the *popolo minuto* who had not been members of the Council were to hold vicariates in the territory.⁷¹

Their support was still being courted by those who, oath or no oath, were not content with the regime. Some Noveschi tried to exploit the reaction in their favour among the *popolo minuto* who had been angered by the attempts of the Riformatori to manipulate them in October. Hoping that some Popolari would join them and give a lead to the *popolo minuto*, on 19 January 1483 they assembled about 200 ‘plebeians’ in San Domenico, to pledge themselves to take up their weapons and demand the restoration of the Nove exiles. But the Concistoro, consulting some Popolari, rejected the demand. A number of the ringleaders and those who had been threatening violence were arrested, and many others fled.⁷² About fifty of the principals of the Monte del Popolo met together at the house of Paolo de Gherardo and agreed another Balia was required.⁷³ On 26 January the Council of the People agreed there should be a Balia of 26 Popolari, until the end of March and then another, to hold office for four months, with thirteen Popolari, eight Noveschi and eight Riformatori.⁷⁴

If the Noveschi behind the assembly in San Domenico had miscalculated, those who occupied the fortified village of Monteriggioni only a few miles from Siena on 1 February (whether they were the

⁶⁹ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 922.

⁷⁰ ASS, Balia 26, f. 175v.

⁷¹ ASS, Concistoro 698, f. 6v.

⁷² Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, p. 1143.

⁷³ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 930. The mandate of the previous Balia had expired at the end of December.

⁷⁴ ASS, Concistoro 698, ff. 14v–15r.

same men is not clear) made an even greater mistake. Their leader was Luzio Bellanti, who had been exiled for life for assassinating Giovanni del Balestriere, but not all of the Nove involved were exiles, and not all of those involved were Nove. Some Popolari were with them, including Fazio Aringhieri, the nephew of one of the most respected Popolari in Siena, Alberto Aringhieri. Not only did they fail to achieve their main aim—the return of all the exiles—but they brought down on the whole Monte dei Nove the anger of the other monti and of the *popolo minuto*, and opened the way for their enemies to press for the exclusion of the Nove from the regime. Noveschi were attacked and wounded in the street, and orders were given for all the Noveschi men to be rounded up, and brought to the Palace for their own protection, and to forestall any disorder they might cause.⁷⁵ As the days dragged on, to the hundreds of Nove held together in the council chamber their detention would have felt like imprisonment, not protective custody. The temporary removal of several of them to form a human shield for the forces trying to recover Monteriggioni was hardly reassuring. They felt particularly insecure on 20 February, when they heard that a Council of the People, without the Nove *riseduti*, had assembled to debate the deposition of their Monte from the regime. Fearing they would be attacked, they barricaded themselves in.⁷⁶

The council had been summoned after a group of thirty Popolari and Riformatori came to the Balìa to demand the exclusion of the Nove from the government.⁷⁷ Despite the ill-feeling against the Nove, the proposal was not accepted easily. Put to the vote several times, it was rejected, until the opponents of the Nove—Riformatori, Dodici and Popolari—sent for their supporters. Once again, a major change to the regime was agreed while an armed mob clamoured outside the gates of the Palace. The Monte dei Nove was to be excluded from the regime, although individual Noveschi could be readmitted. ‘God knows’, recorded Allegretti, who was present, ‘that this was done for fear of worse, and so that those held in the hall should not be killed’.⁷⁸ At last they began to be released on 22 February;

⁷⁵ Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 931–2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 935.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 934.

⁷⁸ Allegretti, ‘Diarii delle cose sanesi’, cols 812–3; Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, pp. 934–5; Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, p. 1145.

within ten days, all but three were freed. Those three, Lodovico Tondi, Biagio Turchi and Angelo Petrucci, were to be interrogated about money they were alleged to have brought to Cino Cinughi when he was rector of Santa Maria della Scala.⁷⁹

Many Sienese were growing weary of political strife and welcomed a proposal from the Balìa, and approved by a council of Popolari riseduti on 21 March, that there should henceforth be only one monte, the Monte del Popolo. This was not intended to disenfranchise the other monti, but to bring them together, as the prologue to the legislation agreed by the Council of the People the following day—by 245 votes to eleven—declared. The system of government by monti had brought death, exiles, fines, and expulsions from the *reggimento* on the citizens of Siena, with many unjustly condemned simply because they belonged to this or that monte: it was an obstacle to civic peace. The remedy was to bring in government by a single monte, which should be the Monte del Popolo. Not only had this been a mediator and conciliator among its fellows, but it also represented the *popolo* in general. All should be called by the same name, that is ‘*de populo et popolare* as they were born and brought up under the same father, that is, generally under the name of the people’. Whatever monte had ruled, the *reggimento* had been called *popolare*.⁸⁰

Traditions of political allegiance and identification going back for a century and more could not be forgotten so easily. When it was decided to add sixty more citizens to the Council of the People, the Council agreed there should be eighteen of the Popolari reggenti, twelve of the *popolo minuto*, twelve Riformatori, twelve Gentiluomini and six Dodici.⁸¹ Although the new Balìa for April and May was not elected ‘according to the monti’, nevertheless ‘every monte’ was ‘discreetly’ represented in it.⁸² Every one except the Nove—the Balìa included 21 Popolari, ten Riformatori, three Dodici and two Gentiluomini.⁸³ Despite the fact that it had been formally agreed

⁷⁹ He had been replaced in early February by Salimbene Capacci, who had held the office before him. (Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, p. 1144.)

⁸⁰ ASS, Consiglio Generale 239, ff. 77v–78r; Isaacs, ‘Cardinali e “Spalagrembi”’, pp. 1034–5; Allegretti, ‘Diarii delle cose sanesi’, col. 813.

⁸¹ ASS, Concistoro 699, f. 27r.

⁸² ASS, Balìa 404, f. 56r.

⁸³ ASS, Concistoro 699, f. 18r.

that individual Noveschi could be accepted into the *reggimento*, in practice they were still under political proscription.

And under the threat of violence. On 1 April, the day before the election of the new Balìa, a mob had broken into the Palace of the Podestà, where the three Noveschi kept back when the others were released were being held, attacked them and an artisan called 'il Cavallino', and threw them from the windows. Ten days later, the three Nove who were imprisoned in fortresses, Antonio Bellanti, Leonardo Gucci and Placido Placidi, were executed—to avoid further popular tumult, the Balìa claimed.⁸⁴ In fact, the riots that resulted in the defenestration of the four men held in the Palace of the Podestà had been deliberately started by a quarrel provoked in the Campo over the expulsion of the Nove.⁸⁵ It was even thought that the Podestà had known what would happen and had absented himself on purpose.⁸⁶ Pressure to prosecute the men detained in the fortresses appears to have come from within the political elite, rather than spontaneously from the *popolo minuto*.

One document which may give some insight into the thinking of a section of the *popolo minuto* is an unsigned, undated letter which from internal evidence was written in March 1483, purportedly on behalf of the *popolo minuto*, 'noi povarelli'. It contained strong criticism of the Balìa for failing to punish those who deserved it. Among those individuals named were Biagio Turchi, 'el Cavallino', and 'Agnolino', who perhaps was Angelo Petrucci, another of those assassinated on 1 April, but not Antonio Bellanti, Leonardo Gucci or Placido Placidi. The letter cannot simply be taken at face value. It is evidently not the work of an unlettered artisan, and a complaint that 'Naddarello', probably Naddo Colombini, one of the most outspoken of the Noveschi, 'has more procurators than the court of Rome' hints at mental horizons that extended beyond the walls of Siena. But it does emphasize matters that would be of most concern to the *popolo minuto*: grain prices are rising, there are not enough supplies for three months but it is being exported by land and sea—'everyone is hurrying to starve us to make us desperate'. It was written from the point of view of those who formed the crowds of

⁸⁴ ASS, Balìa 404, f. 66r-v.

⁸⁵ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1146; 'Diario senese', f. 40v.

⁸⁶ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 813-4.

popolari—‘You wanted us to take up arms’—and now felt betrayed by the Popolari who were in the government, who were treating their enemies too tenderly. ‘You are letting all the citizens leave . . . and you make so many excuses for them that you don’t make for us who risked a thousand deaths for you, and you don’t see they are doing it to show you that you cannot live without them and to make this *popolo* your enemy. . . . They don’t think you are worth a bean [non vi stimano uno lupino], and they are right because you not fit to govern [non sete homini da governo].’⁸⁷

Whatever reservations need to be borne in mind about how representative of the mood of the *popolo minuto* the sentiments expressed in the letter might be, it does show that the Balia was being urged to take a strong line of action, by some who at least claimed to be speaking on behalf of the *popolo*. Some of the Noveschi, who had fled from Siena in their hundreds, cited fear of violence from the *popolo minuto* as a reason for their reluctance to return.⁸⁸ Their fears were groundless, the author of the anonymous letter claimed: ‘not a man says a harsh word to them; if we had wanted to do them harm, there wouldn’t have been one left alive’.⁸⁹ Yet even he recognized there was a problem of public order in Siena. ‘The city is full of outlaws, of thieves and assassins and murderers.’⁹⁰ Lack of employment, however, not fear, was causing an exodus of the *popolo minuto* from Siena. So many Nove had left the city, closing up their businesses and houses, that there was a shortage of jobs. By September, large numbers of Sienese artisans were turning up in Rome, complaining that not a farthing was to be earned in Siena.⁹¹

Laments by the exiles about the threats they feared from the *popolo minuto*, reinforced the negative image that a self-proclaimed popular regime was bound to present to other governments. Efforts were made to give assurance that Siena was in the hands of capable men. Sienese ambassadors in Rome sought to demonstrate that those in power in Siena ‘are worthy men and wealthy, and that they [the Nove exiles] are not the only ones with riches and good sense’.⁹²

⁸⁷ ASS, Balia 517, 91.

⁸⁸ ASS, Balia 28, f. 38v; Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, p. 213.

⁸⁹ ASS, Balia 517, 91.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ ASS, Balia 514, 61: Lorenzo Lanti, 7 Sept. 1483, Rome.

⁹² ASS, Balia 510, 81: Sienese ambassadors in Rome, 25 May 1483, Rome.

Appointments to office were made with 'discretion', the pope was informed in January 1484.⁹³ He should not be misled by 'a bad universal impression that our government is bad and vulgar', Lorenzo de' Medici was told in April that year.⁹⁴

And indeed, despite the special provisions to bring members of the *popolo minuto* into the government and to give them privileged access to offices in Sienese territory, few found their way onto the most powerful magistracy, the Balia. From January 1483 there was a continuous series of Balie, generally elected for three months. If those elected to serve on them were often new to this responsibility, they were usually just the kind of men who sat on Balie under earlier regimes. Of the 117 members of Balie from June 1482 to July 1487, the majority, 82, had not sat on one before.⁹⁵ Of those 82 new men, 42 were Popolari: all of these were *riseduti* before they became members of the Balia, and none were among the *popolari minuti* directly introduced into the Council of the People. Fourteen of these new men were among the 23 Popolari who sat on ten or more of the twenty Balie from June 1482 to June 1487; six of the fourteen had been *riseduti* since the 1450s, four since the 1460s, and the remaining four since the early 1470s. Newly prominent they may have been, but all had a decade or more of experience of participation in Sienese political life behind them.

There were 32 men in all—eight Riformatori and a Dodicino, as well as the 23 Popolari—who sat on ten or more of the Balie during the years when the Monte del Popolo dominated the government. Nothing in their background marked them out as notably different from those who had served most frequently on balie and special commissions in the 1430s and 1440s. Twelve of them had close relations, fathers, brothers, uncles or first cousins, who had served on Balie before them. Those who did not included highly respected men such as Andrea Piccolomini, Andrea Capacci (whose father Cristofano had begun as a notary of humble origins but then had a distinguished career, often holding office as the chancellor of

⁹³ ASS, Balia 521, 41: Lorenzo Lanti, 23 Jan. 1484, Rome.

⁹⁴ ASF, MAP 39, 156: Ricco Ricchi, 30 Apr. 1484, Siena.

⁹⁵ They had not been among the forty-one men who served on the Balie charged with administering Sienese military efforts during the period from June 1477 to March 1480, or among the 39 men who served on Balie from June 1480 to June 1481.

Siena), and Ricco Ricchi and Guidantonio Buoninsegni, who were both doctors of law. Others such as the Riformatore Luca Vieri, a spicer, and the Popolare banker, Jacomo di Mariano di Checco, would be members of Balie after July 1487 as well. These 32 men and their colleagues who served less frequently on the Balie during the years of Popolare dominance were generally elected by scrutiny in the Council of the People, where elections could be influenced but not rigged. Like the members of the Balie of the 1450s, they were not a self-appointed, self-perpetuating caucus. Radical as the Popolare regime was perceived to be—and it would become more radical in 1486–7—there was no social revolution at the heart of the government.

One of the criticisms the exiles made about the regime was that decisions were being taken by only four or five members of the Balia meeting together, without proper deliberation.⁹⁶ Assembling enough members to constitute a quorum was a persistent problem, particularly in the summer and early autumn, and on several occasions a group of ten or so would be delegated powers to conduct business for a specified period.⁹⁷ Reluctance to stay in the city during hot weather and fear of disease probably accounted for much of this absenteeism. But there may also have been an element of reluctance among some of those elected to the Balia to be involved in the political infighting that the expulsion of the Nove had not laid to rest.

Rivalries and disagreements among the Popolari were the major source of trouble. The division between those who were allied with the Riformatori and favoured continued discrimination against the Nove, and those who favoured a more conciliatory policy, persisted. This second group was known as the Bigi; the first group (who may have been known as the Rossi)⁹⁸ were the stronger. Although the Balia declared that the *popolo* would never stand for the return of the Noveschi exiles,⁹⁹ the exiles did have sympathisers among the

⁹⁶ ASS, Balia 510, 49: Guidantonio Buoninsegni, Lorenzo Lanti and Ricco Ricchi, 16 May 1483, Rome.

⁹⁷ For example, ASS, Balia 32, f. 48r.

⁹⁸ One intention of provisions to promote unity in the city in September 1484 was described as being 'that no one should recall either "bigi" or "rossi" any more'. (ASF, MAP 39, 328: Tommaso Biringucci to Lorenzo de' Medici, 15 Sept. 1484, Siena.)

⁹⁹ ASS, Balia 404, f. 234r.

popolo minuto. Discontented by the lack of employment caused by the absence of so many prosperous citizens, and disgusted by the return to the Florentines of the remaining places captured during the Pazzi War,¹⁰⁰ many *popolari* were not enthusiastic about the new regime, for all its self-proclaimed *popolare* character, and the unprecedented access to office that it gave them. The Bigi hoped to harness this discontent, but were hesitant about providing the leadership to marshal the crowds and use them as a political instrument. Their opponents took the initiative, and the Balìa ordered enquiries into those ‘who want to disturb the present government by word or deed’, and those maintaining contacts with the exiles.¹⁰¹ Two cobblers, Domenico Nucci and Bernardino di Giovanni, known as “Pepo”, were arrested, tortured and executed on 6 April 1484. They were accused of plotting to admit the Nove exiles to the city by the Fontebranda, but when their sentences were read out they denied this. After their arrest, several other artisans fled the city. A Novesco, Lorenzo Rocchi, known as “lo strega” (“the warlock”), ‘a man of no great intellect but with a bold and rash tongue’,¹⁰² was also arrested, accused of disseminating among the people a prophecy in favour of the Nove. Threatened with torture, he threw himself from the window of the Palace of the Podestà, and died a few hours later—‘but I think he may have been thrown out’, confided Allegretti to his diary.¹⁰³

‘Nearly all the *popolo*’ had demanded the execution of the two cobblers, who had ‘spoken of matters that were not fitting’, and ‘there is no split among us, the *reggenti*’, Ricco Ricchi assured Lorenzo de’ Medici.¹⁰⁴ Only a few months later, however, Ricco was consulting Lorenzo about whether he thought they should ‘sort out our affairs’ by expelling some malcontents from the regime; this reckoning had only been delayed so that the city did not seem divided.¹⁰⁵ The leading Bigi, Alberto Aringhieri, the master of works of the cathedral, and Francesco del Marretta, were already being threat-

¹⁰⁰ Their return was the price of an alliance with the Florentines, to stop them supporting the exiles: Shaw, ‘Politics and institutional innovation’, 103 (1996), pp. 93–5.

¹⁰¹ ASS, Balìa 31, f. 76v.

¹⁰² Nuscis, ‘Una nuova cronaca senese’, p. 1149.

¹⁰³ Allegretti, ‘Diarii delle cose sanesi’, cols 816–7; ‘Diario senese’, f. 43r.

¹⁰⁴ ASF, MAP 39, 121, 128: Ricco Ricchi to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 1, 7 Apr. 1484, Siena.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 287: Ricco Ricchi to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 16 Aug. 1484, Siena.

ened. Intimidated, Aringhieri left the city, declaring his intention of fulfilling his obligation as a Knight of St John of Jerusalem to go to defend Rhodes. The exiles (who included his nephew Fazio) hoped he would join them, but once he received reassurances from the Balia and was told he would keep his post at the cathedral, he pledged himself to return.¹⁰⁶ Aringhieri's clerical status may have afforded him some protection, but after the death of Sixtus IV removed a pope who had expressed great sympathy for the Noveschi, the Bigi and the Nove in Siena came under assault. Borghese Borghesi's house was attacked, for example, and he hurried out of the city on foot in some disarray, pursued by a group of 'plebeians'. He was rescued by some peasants, and only returned to Siena after a few days when the disorder had died down.¹⁰⁷

The city became quieter, because those who had seen the death of Sixtus as a signal to begin settling accounts with their enemies and rivals were disconcerted by the election of Cardinal Gianbattista Cibo as the new pope, Innocent VIII. Mindful of his indignation after efforts he had made in March 1483 as papal legate to bring an end to political violence in Siena had been mocked by the defenestration of the prisoners in the Palace of the Podestà, they had good grounds for concern about how he would regard the regime. While the opponents of the Bigi still kept the upper hand, they could not triumph over them as much as they may have hoped to do. Francesco del Marretta, his brother Agostino and his son Andrea were exiled for five years on 7 September, accused of acts to the detriment of the republic and the regime, especially concerning dissension among the citizens.¹⁰⁸ But there was no general proscription of the Bigi.

Instead, there was a set of provisions 'for the well-being and preservation of the present regime', approved by the Council of the People on 8 September, and backed by another oath. Justice was to be executed fairly, and no one was to try to impede its course. No one was to call into question the expulsion of the Nove from the regime, or any other measures against them. No one was to meddle with the *reggimento*, or to criticize any decisions concerning it. No one was

¹⁰⁶ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1149; ASS, Balia 519, 37; Lorenzo Lanti, 24 July 1484, Rome; *ibid.*, 79; Alberto Aringhieri, 14 Aug. 1484, Venice.

¹⁰⁷ Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1150.

¹⁰⁸ ASS, Balia 32, f. 41r-v.

to reproach anyone else 'that in the past they have followed one party rather than another', or use any party names, but everyone should live together as good citizens. No one was, for any reason, to take up arms or to 'incite the *popolo* to arms', unless the bell of the Palace was rung. No violence or extortion was to be used against anybody. Anyone who had organized cliques or factions in the past was to be pardoned, but no such groupings were to be formed in the future. 'To remove all apprehension from those who are at present in the *reggimento*', everyone was to be absolved for anything they had done against it in the past. Anyone who contravened these provisions should be denounced. All citizens were to take an oath, pledging themselves not to call into question any decrees or decisions by any magistracy against the Nove or the exiles, not to do anything by word or deed against the present regime, and not to form any political cliques or factions. Those who contravened the oath would fall under the same terrible curse as had been supposed to seal the oath of fraternal concord between the Riformatori and the Noveschi guaranteed by the Popolari less than two years before.¹⁰⁹

A need for continual vigilance against the machinations of the enemies of the regime, inside and outside Siena, was the justification cited in January 1485 for a provision that there should be a Balìa, elected every three months, for the five years after the end of the next scheduled one.¹¹⁰ As in 1457, popular government was to be defended by taking authority from what should have been the major executive committee, the Concistoro, and conferring it on an extraordinary body whose members were not selected by sortition but elected, and who could be, and often were, re-elected again and again. This time it was envisaged that the arrangement would last for five years, not three. Although the Sienese were becoming accustomed to government by Balìa, this was supposed to be an expedient adopted to deal with specific problems or difficult situations, not a matter of routine—hence the justification offered for this significant provision. Nor was it a specious excuse. External enemies, the exiles, caused great alarm that spring and early summer by preparing a large-scale assault with, it was feared, the support of the new pope. When the attack came in mid-May, however, the exiles' forces made

¹⁰⁹ ASS, Concistoro 708, ff. 4v–5v; Consiglio Generale 239, ff. 228r–231r.

¹¹⁰ ASS, Concistoro 710, ff. 5v, 11r–12r; Consiglio Generale 240, ff. 1v–2v.

little progress, and quickly withdrew. Orders were issued that no one was to insult or rob or do violence to the Nove.¹¹¹ That many felt bitterly towards them is indicated by the practice Sigismondo Tizio noted developing in 1485, of avoiding using the numeral 'nove' (nine) when votes were being counted in the council or the Concistoro, or when quoting a price, by saying, for example, 'eight, and one more, ten', or 'twenty-eight, and one more'.¹¹²

As they were preparing defences against the exiles in late April, the Balìa claimed that the city had never been more united, more peaceful, asserting that 'All the citizens are of one mind and our votes show it', because they were all unanimous.¹¹³ There were signs, however, that it was not only the Nove who were dissatisfied by the regime. In February 1485, two principal Riformatori, Filippo Buoninsegni and Francesco di Tommaso Luti, were prosecuted for stirring up discontent by saying that a cabal had been formed to try to fix appointments to offices. Buoninsegni was sentenced to two years' exile and to be ammonito for ten years; Luti was to be ammonito for four years. Disappointed ambition, that they had not had the offices they desired, was the motive officially ascribed to them.¹¹⁴ Another Buoninsegni, Guidantonio—who could not complain of lack of office, having been a member of most of the Balie that were not for Popolari only since June 1482, and who in 1485 was the Sienese ambassador in Rome—had different criticisms of the regime. Together with a prominent Popolare, Lorenzo Venturini (a member of every Balìa since June 1482), he admonished their colleagues to be vigilant, to lay avarice aside, 'and to see that what is done, is done by the magistrates and not by the will of individuals'.¹¹⁵ Being weary of injustice and disorder, and wishing that the exiles could return and every man live peacefully in his own home, was all that three men arrested in late November confessed. Two of them, a Gentiluomo, Lodovico Tolomei and a Popolare, Tome Gori (whose father Antonio had been exiled in 1457), were executed before

¹¹¹ ASS, Balìa 33, ff. 60v–61v, 77r.

¹¹² Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, p. 141; Tizio arrived in Siena to study in 1482.

¹¹³ ASS, Balìa 405, ff. 25v–26r.

¹¹⁴ ASS, Concistoro 715, f. 18v; Concistoro 1591, ff. 51v–52r.

¹¹⁵ ASS, Balìa 524, 15: Guidantonio Buoninsegni and Lorenzo Venturini, 11 June 1485, Rome.

dawn on 2 January 1486. The third man, a Novesco, Francesco Tancredi, and four others, including Francesco Luti, were exiled. Filippo Buoninsegni's term of exile was extended. Several men were to be ammoniti and fined. All were said to have been named in the confessions of Lodovico Tolomei and Tome Gori, and their sentences were supposed to be a warning to others not to speak or act against the regime, or to fail to reveal what they knew of such words or deeds. The majority of those sentenced were Gentiluomini, but that this group also included Popolari and Riformatori as well as Noveschi is indicative of how dissatisfaction with the regime could unite men of various monti.¹¹⁶

Adding to the malaise was the decline in economic activity caused by the absence of so many of Siena's more prosperous citizens. Several hundred Noveschi preferred self-exile to staying in a city where they felt insecure. As early as September 1483, Sienese artisans had been turning up in Rome complaining that there was no work to be had in Siena, and the Bigi had hoped to exploit the discontent caused among the *popolo minuto* by the shortage of jobs.¹¹⁷ That lack of employment was causing many young men to look to holding office as a way of making a living was a cause for concern, the Balìa noted in early February 1486, 'because sometimes, indeed often, this leads to dissension, cabals and discords and other evils, as everybody knows'.¹¹⁸

At that time, competition for office was causing great trouble, and would provide the opportunity for the more radical Popolari, known as the Biribatti, to push through a revision of the regime in order to give the Monte del Popolo a still greater share in it. When names were drawn in late December 1485 from the purses for podestarie, there were 22 Riformatori and only three from the Monte del Popolo. This caused great indignation among the Popolari. Rumours were spread that the Riformatori and the Dodici were getting more than their share of offices and that they were plotting against the other monti. Some claimed that the Riformatori had rigged the compila-

¹¹⁶ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 201–2; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 337–9; 'Diario senese', ff. 44v–45r; ASS, Concistoro 1591, ff. 60v–63v.

¹¹⁷ ASS, Balìa 514, 61; Lorenzo Lanti, 7 Sept. 1483, Rome; Nuscis, 'Una nuova cronaca senese', p. 1149.

¹¹⁸ Isaacs, 'Cardinali e "Spalagrembi"', p. 1040.

tion of the electoral purses, not including as many Popolari as there should have been. Once again there was a threat of violence in the streets, and apprehension that the Riformatori would be exiled, together with those Popolari friendly to them. Claims were made that there were twice as many Popolari as the Riformatori, Dodici and Gentiluomini combined, and that they should therefore have two-thirds of the offices. At carnival time, a hundred masked Popolari rode through the Campo, and went to the house of Cristofano Gionta, asking him to consent to bringing the Biribatti out onto the streets to make their demands. He persuaded them that they should try to get what they wanted from the councils before turning to force. Cristofano's house was a main meeting place for the Biribatti, but he was only one of the Popolari members of the Balìa who were propagating the criticism that the Riformatori were enjoying too many of the available offices. Others included Paolo di Gherardo, and Matteo and Mino Pannilini—all, like Cristofano, men of substance, and not among those for whom government office represented a lifeline out of economic difficulties. Those of their colleagues on the Balìa who tried to calm the situation down were unable to do so.¹¹⁹

Members of the other monti had good reason to feel intimidated, and did not resist the reform of the regime drawn up by the Balìa, and passed by the Council of the People on 3 March 1486. The Riformatore Guidantonio Buoninsegni would later claim that he had been the only member of his Monte or of the Gentiluomini or Dodici to speak in favour of this measure.¹²⁰ There was still to be a single monte, called the Monte del Popolo, but it would be divided into two *ordini* (orders). The first order would be comprised of all those who were of the Monte del Popolo proper, and to them, as the most numerous monte, would be allotted half the seats on the Concistoro, and three-fifths of the other offices for which electoral purses were compiled. The second order would consist of all the Riformatori, Dodici and Gentiluomini, who would share the remainder of the offices.¹²¹ The principle that the most numerous monte should hold

¹¹⁹ Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, pp. 151–3; Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 818; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 340–2.

¹²⁰ ASS, Balìa 523, 91; Guidantonio Buoninsegni, 21 Sept. 1486, Colle.

¹²¹ ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, f. 79v.

more offices than the others was not part of the Sienese tradition of *popolare* government. It was advanced not by a mob of the *popolo minuto*, clamouring for greater access to the pickings of office, but by the more prosperous Popolari, who took the opportunity of the carnival to make a public show of force on horseback.

Soon the *popolo minuto* was called into play again, not to further this egalitarian principle, but to play a part in the struggle for the leadership of the Popolare regime, which took on a new intensity. The issue used to appeal for the *popolo minuto*'s support was not that of access to or shares of offices for themselves or others, but of relations with Siena's traditional rival in Tuscany, Florence. In late March 1486, there was a heated debate about whether the alliance with Florence, made in 1483, should be renewed. One of those opposed to the renewal, the leading Biribatto Ser Giovanni Cecchini, revealed that some prominent Sienese political figures had accepted money from the Florentines to facilitate the return of the towns taken from Florence during the Pazzi War. This money, said to be 8,000 ducats, had been intended, Cecchini maintained somewhat implausibly, for distribution among the *popolo minuto*, but had been shared among a few men. Those reported to have been named by him were the Popolari Lorenzo Venturini, Ricco Ricchi and Francesco Severini, and the most popular political figure among the Dodici, Bartolomeo Sozzini. None, apparently, denied receiving money, but, they riposted, so had Giovanni Cecchini; he was only complaining because he had not got as much as the others, Alleghetti heard. These reports raised a stir among the *popolo*, but not the armed confrontation that some of the Biribatti may have been hoping for.¹²²

Giovanni Cecchini took to roaming the streets at night with gangs of armed men, making those Popolari favourable to the Riformatori, including Lorenzo Venturini, Crescenzo Gori and the long-standing notary of the Balìa, Ser Girolamo di Nanni di Cione, afraid to leave their houses after dark. None of them suffered violence, but Cecchini did kill in broad daylight an elderly member of a deputation of citizens from Ischia in the Maremma who had come to Siena to complain about the misgovernment of their podestà, his brother Girolamo. This incident caused a scandal, and the unfortunate envoy was given

¹²² Alleghetti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 818–9; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 344; 'Diario senese', f. 45r.

an official funeral in the Duomo by the Concistoro. But Cecchini went unpunished, 'because of his prominence among the Popolari'.¹²³ A few days later, about 21 April, reports that the Riformatori were holding meetings with the former Popolari exiles, 'with the encouragement of the Florentines', brought more gatherings of armed men at Cristofano Gionta's house, but again the threat of violence receded.¹²⁴ An attempt in June by the anti-Florentines to rouse the *popolo minuto* to arms failed.¹²⁵ At a meeting of all the principal Popolari to discuss the differences dividing them, Paolo di Gherardo, who had done much to prevent the escalation into violence, protested at length that public business should be dealt with by regular procedures and taking votes, not by trying to inflame the *popolo*. The great majority of those at the meeting seemed to be of his opinion. Some did try to justify what had occurred, alleging, for example, that at the last election of the Balia in late April there had been plots to attempt to replace some regular members with others—a significant indication of how it had become expected that some men should be routinely re-elected. In the end, it was agreed that private rancours should be put aside and troublesome issues, such as the return of exiles, should not be raised again.¹²⁶

This meeting marked a public parting of the ways of two of the principal Popolari whose names had frequently been linked in the past, Paolo di Gherardo and Cristofano Gionta. Not only did he denounce recourse to violence and outside pressure to settle disputes, Paolo di Gherardo declared himself favourable to continued friendship with Florence.¹²⁷ This clearly set him apart from the more extreme Popolari, with whom Cristofano Gionta had apparently thrown in his lot. Cristofano Gionta had by no means been an enemy of Florence in the past. Significantly, several letters written to Lorenzo de' Medici jointly by him and Paolo di Gherardo survive, asking for advice, for example, on which *condottiere* the Sienese should hire.¹²⁸ His prominence in the Popolare regime was manifested

¹²³ 'perché si ritrovava gran maestro co' Popolari': Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 819; 'Diario senese', f. 45v.

¹²⁴ 'Diario senese', f. 45v; Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, pp. 159–60.

¹²⁵ ASF, X di Balia, Resp., b. 36, c. 394: Andrea Cambini, 3 June 1486, Siena.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, cc. 406, 412: Andrea Cambini, 9 and 11 June 1486, Siena.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ ASF, MAP 39, 116, 79: Paolo di Gherardo and Cristofano Gionta, 27 Mar. 1484, 7 Feb. 1485, Siena.

by the way his name was usually put at or near the top of the list of members of the various Balie on which he sat, with Paolo di Gherardo's name usually just a little lower. Both he and Paolo sat on every Balia from June 1482 to July 1487.¹²⁹ His contribution to the consolidation of the regime was rewarded in 1483, 'at the urging of many citizens', by a grant of the tenement of Caldaria that had belonged to Antonio Bellanti. While he deserved to have this as a gift, it was said, he was to pay 1,000 florins to the commune for it.¹³⁰ Others, including Paolo di Gherardo, were allowed to buy property, but they did not receive such fulsome praise. During the last year of the Popolare regime, Cristofano Gionta became the leading figure in it—though at the cost of further violence, bloodshed, exiles and political proscriptions.

The crisis in June had been dampened by the emptying of Siena, as all those who could took refuge in the country from an epidemic that swept the city.¹³¹ During the summer, the rival that most pre-occupied Cristofano Gionta and the Biribatti was Francesco Severini. He had been gathering young men around him in the city by offering banquets, with music and dancing, and continued this lavish entertaining in the country. Such behaviour does not seem an obvious way to vie for the leadership of a radical popular government. According to Tommasi, Severini was aiming to become the leader of the 'second order', the members of the other monti who were being treated as second-class members of the regime.¹³² Besides, he was by nature profligate and extravagant, and seems to have habitually adopted an aristocratic style that was beyond his means. His own brother Giovanni admitted that Francesco could justifiably be accused of 'wanting to make a show and to live not like a citizen or a private person but like a lord', and said that he had warned his brother about this.¹³³

On the night of 18 September many Biribatti returned to Siena in force. In the morning, Cristofano Gionta came to the city, and

¹²⁹ The only other men to do this were Crescenzo Gori, Bartolomeo Landucci and Andrea Piccolomini.

¹³⁰ ASS, Concistoro 701, ff. 12v–13r.

¹³¹ 'Diario senese', f. 46r.

¹³² Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, p. 344.

¹³³ 'volersi far vedere et tenere la vita sua non civile né de privata persona, ma da Signore': ASS, Balia 527, 89: Giovanni Severini, 19 Sept. 1486, Montevarchi.

together with other leading Biribatti, including Matteo Pannilini and Giovanni Cecchini, lead a large crowd of *popolari* to the Campo. Warned of what was afoot, Francesco Severini appeared a little later with some of his supporters, but they were not prepared for a fight. When, to cries of 'Popolo e Libertà', skirmishing began, they realized they were outnumbered and retired. Francesco Severini and his brother Sozzino fled from Siena. Before the day was out, all the Severini brothers were declared rebels, and their property confiscated.¹³⁴

The official explanations sent by the Balia to Florence and to Cardinal Piccolomini described Francesco Severini and his brothers as wishing to disturb the peaceful regime of Siena. 'As is usually done when bringing down men of some authority who are trouble-makers, our *popolo* took up their weapons, always ready to castigate and punish those who err, and to maintain this our *popolare reggimento*', and would not be satisfied until the Severini had been sentenced.¹³⁵ Only the letter to Cardinal Piccolomini mentions the election of a new Balia of Popolari only. It does not say when it was elected and by whom, and the other evidence for the election of this Balia is conflicting.¹³⁶ The 26 names listed in the Concistoro deliberations were headed by Cristofano Gionta, Paolo di Gherardo, Andrea Piccolomini and Alberto Aringhieri. The members included several prominent Biribatti, including Matteo and Mino Pannilini, Bindo di Giovanni di Ser Minoccio and Ser Giovanni Cecchini (one of six men who had not previously sat on Balie), but also some who had been accounted their opponents, such as Crescenzo Gori and Agnolo Palmieri.¹³⁷ Seventeen of the remaining twenty were among those who sat on ten or more Balie between June 1482 and July 1487.

There was little doubt, however, that the Biribatti were now in charge. A number of their opponents were being rounded up, and on 20 September the Balia had to issue a decree that no further arrests should be made—or property taken—without their orders.

¹³⁴ Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, pp. 167–8; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 345–7; Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, III, f. 92v; Alleghetti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 820, pp. 209–11. Although Paolo di Gherardo had returned to Siena that day, it is not clear that he came to the Campo with the Biribatti, as I wrote in 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), p. 208.

¹³⁵ ASS, Balia 406, ff. 83r–v (to Dieci di Balia of Florence, 20 Sept. 1486), 84r–v (to Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, 22 Sept. 1486).

¹³⁶ See Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 209–11.

¹³⁷ ASS, Concistoro 720, f. 6r–v.

To justify the pursuit of the Biribatti's rivals, the cry was raised that the Florentines were preparing to attack Siena.¹³⁸ A reward was offered for the capture of Lorenzo Venturini, who was soon found hiding.¹³⁹ Complicity with the Florentines—receiving a total of 1,000 ducats from them to favour the return of the captured townships, plotting with them to kill Cristofano Gionta and others—figured large in the crimes to which he confessed, after torture. He was executed on 9 October. Two days later about ten men, nearly all Popolari, said to have been named in his confession were exiled. These included six members of the prominent Popolare family of Capacci, and Jacomo di Mariano di Cecco, who had sat on nearly all the Balie since June 1482 (but not on the new one elected in September). On 8 November, about forty other men—twenty-seven Riformatori, ten Dodici and a few Popolari—were ammoniti.¹⁴⁰

This was done, the Balia explained, to consolidate 'this our present *popolare reggimento*'. At the same time that regime was being significantly changed, to give an even greater advantage to the Monte del Popolo. The Balia decided that henceforth only members of the 'first order' were to be members of the Balia, that they were to have three-fifths of the seats on the Concistoro, and that all electoral purses were to be compiled in 'a Council of the People', of at least 150, all from the 'first order'.¹⁴¹ Such a council of Popolari only was the body that approved provisions that the present Balia should continue in office for the duration of the electoral purses for the Concistoro, which would mean for seven years. At the end of their initial term, ten additional members, all Popolari, were to be added, elected by a council of members of the 'first order'. The Balia was to have 'full, free and absolute power, authority and *balia*', the provisions proclaimed—only to set out a list of wide-ranging restrictions on that power. They were not, for example, to grant any offices, 'under any pretext', or make up electoral purses. They could not even add anyone to the Council of the People. They were not to interfere in civil justice, nor were they to have power to make leagues with other states.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ 'Diario senese', f. 46v; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 347–8.

¹³⁹ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 820.

¹⁴⁰ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 821; Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, p. 173; Tizio lists three Popolari, Allegretti six.

¹⁴¹ ASS, Balia 406, ff. 119v–120v.

¹⁴² ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, f. 109r–v.

It is unlikely that such limitations on the power of the Balia were quite what the Biribatti had in mind. They had pushed too far. No longer could the Monte del Popolo be represented as deserving a larger share in the *reggimento* because of its role as a peacemaker, as being in some way the embodiment of the *popolo* from which the government derived its legitimation. Permanently excluded from the Balia, members of the other monti had good reason to fear that sooner or later they would be excluded from the *reggimento* altogether, so they had nothing to gain by supporting it. Many Popolari did not identify their interests with the Biribatti regime either, and would probably have agreed with Allegretti that the government had fallen into the hands of a few disreputable Popolari, and that these few bad men could do more than the other, worthy, men.¹⁴³ Nor could the Biribatti base their rule on the support of the *popolo minuto*. They could not provide jobs for those unable to find work, and there would be many artisans and shopkeepers and labourers who, like the author of the 'Diario senese', longed for an end to upheavals and political violence, who wanted a peaceful life in which honest men could settle to earn an honest living.¹⁴⁴ There was growing support for the idea that there could be no lasting repose for Siena until the exiles came back, an argument forcefully promoted by Cardinal Piccolomini. Only the Biribatti disagreed, and resisted. Cristofano Gionta and Matteo Pannilini might have been prepared to yield to the cardinal's persuasions, but they were kept in line, threatened even, according to Allegretti, by Bindo di Ser Minoccio and others of their followers.¹⁴⁵

When the time came for the election of the members to join the Balia, in late March 1487, twelve men were added. Only three were newcomers to the Balia, and of these one, Marco di Lorenzo di maestro Marco, was the son of a man who had served in Balie in the 1450s, and the brother of a man, Fortino, who was already on the Balia. Two of those added, Girolamo Telani and Pietro da Chianciano, had also served on Balie in the 1450s, as well as later ones. Among the others were men of the standing of Lorenzo Lanti, Ricco Ricchi and Jacopo Piccolomini, brother of the cardinal and of Andrea.¹⁴⁶ As a whole, this group surely represented a strength-

¹⁴³ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 821.

¹⁴⁴ 'Diario senese', f. 47r.

¹⁴⁵ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 821.

¹⁴⁶ ASS, Concistoro 723, f. 10r-v.

ening of the moderates on the Balìa. Within a month of their joining it, the Balìa decreed that all the Popolari exiles—except the Severini brothers, the sons of Lorenzo Venturini, Camillo and Alessandro, and Tommaso da Casole—could return, although they were to remain ammoniti.¹⁴⁷ Rather than relieve the pressure for a general restoration of the exiles this only increased it. Cristofano Gionta, the Pannilini brothers, Matteo and Mino, and Bindo di Ser Minoccio were among those opposed to this, as were some of the Popolari who held property formerly belonging to Noveschi. But others who had such property, and who had been involved in their persecution, including Giovanni Cecchini, Agnolo Palmieri and Crescenzo Gori, were nevertheless now ready to advocate the return of at least most of the Nove exiles. So general was the opposition to what the Popolare regime had become that when the exiles returned of their own volition on 22 July 1487, there were few who were prepared to resist them.

The radical Popolare regime tarnished, and to some degree discredited, the idea of popular government in Siena. At first, the pre-eminence of the Monte del Popolo was justified by the role of peace-maker between the Nove and Riformatori that it adopted in late 1482. Its members were acting not just as a neutral third party, but as, in some sense, the representative of the *popolo* in general, a role that the monte had not really assumed before, despite its name. It also associated itself with the *popolo minuto*, although members of the other monti also had dependents and followers among the *popolo minuto*, whom they tried to mobilize to help them fight their battles in the streets.

The engagement of the *popolo minuto* in the political troubles of the 1480s went beyond merely fighting the battles of others. They took on the defence of the ethos of peaceful popular government, acting through the militia companies of their neighbourhoods to combat the attempts of particular groups to pursue their ends by force; they were not just trying to keep the peace. When offices and seats in the Council of the People were reserved and allocated to members of the *popolo minuto*, they do not seem to have been greedy for more. Some individuals among those who had been hitherto politi-

¹⁴⁷ Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, p. 176.

cally disenfranchised may have desired a share in government, but the *popolo minuto* in general were more concerned with their everyday jobs, with earning their daily bread, than with holding public offices. Even when political rivalries and violence drove into exile, forced or voluntary, many of those who ordinarily provided them with employment, there was no clamour among the *popolo minuto* for a greater share in public offices in compensation for the difficulties they faced. Many of them chose rather to go into exile as well.

Who had what share of government posts was much more the concern of the members of the *monti* than of the *popolo minuto*. The radical Popolari who pressed for a greater share for their own *monte* based their claims on the argument that their *monte* was much more numerous than the others, and should therefore have a larger proportion of offices. Understandably, when they won this, members of the other *monti* were dissatisfied, and it also caused divisions among the Popolari themselves. Many leading Popolari seem to have been more sympathetic to the concerns of the other *monti* who were being pushed to the sidelines, than to the radicals of their own *monte*. The assemblies of Popolari only that met were generally trying to resolve a crisis, to find a way out of a dilemma, not to advance an agenda of their own. Even when such an assembly approved the proposition that the *Balia* should henceforth be composed of Popolari only, it placed restrictions on the powers the *Balia* could exercise.

It became evident that the radicals could not gather enough support from their own *monte* to consolidate the position that they were trying to establish, and did not have the support of the *popolo minuto*. Their attempts to manipulate and exploit the ideals and the institutions of popular government for their own ends failed. In fact, there was little sign that they had any end in view other than a greater share of power for themselves and those they hoped would support them. Whatever their ultimate aims may have been, they tainted the idea of popular government for the Sieneſe. Henceforth, members of the other *monti* would be wary of the *Monte del Popolo*, and not prepared to concede that it had any special role as representative of the *popolo* as a whole. The members of the Sieneſe *reggimento* in general would be less inclined to celebrate the identity of their government as a *governo popolare*.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN INSECURE OLIGARCHY

Within months of the overthrow of the Popolare regime, there would be a decisive shift away from popular government in Siena towards an oligarchic regime. This shift was conscious and deliberate, and was impelled principally by some of the returning exiles. Their main instrument, as for the radical Popolari, was the Balia. Unlike the radical Popolari, they would successfully establish a long-term Balia, whose members would be given the power not only to stay in office themselves without seeking periodic re-election or confirmation, but also be given wide authority. By no means all Sienese approved of this, and very many strongly disapproved of the way the members of the Balia used their power. But they yearned for a return to the stability that Siena had enjoyed for so long, and which had been lost since 1480, and this, it was argued, was what a long-term Balia could provide. Attachment to the traditional form of government, by the Concistoro and the Council of the People, was strong and deep-rooted, however. The would-be oligarchs would encounter strong resistance from those who regarded the long-term Balia as a temporary expedient, not a permanent addition to the political institutions of Siena.

The exiles who entered Siena in the early morning of 22 July 1487 met with neither widespread opposition, nor an ecstatic welcome. Only a few men joined them as they made their way through the streets crying 'Nove', 'Popolo', 'Pace' and 'Libertà'. This lack of response disconcerted the hired infantry that they had brought with them, who had to be encouraged to advance into the centre of the city. The most determined resistance came from the Captain of the People, the Biribatto Matteo Pannilini, who ordered the gates of the Palace of the Signoria to be locked against them. As the exiles forced their way into the palace by threatening to burn the gates, he retreated to the bell tower, where he held out until the evening before surrendering. Meanwhile, the other members of the Concistoro, meeting with about eighty leading citizens, annulled the Balia, and the Concistoro elected twenty 'Provvisionati' from all the monti

to assume full authority until Cardinal Piccolomini should arrive.¹

The Nove did not behave as victors, out for revenge. Some may have wished for vengeance on their enemies, but their behaviour on the whole indicated that lessons had been learned from the travails of Siena since the summer of 1480. It is worthy of note that 1480, not 1482, was taken as the significant date in those matters that were considered to need review, such as the number of Popolari who had recently become *riseduti*, or the accounts of those who had handled public money.² There was little bloodshed. Cristofano Gionta was killed by a group of exiles who had gone to find him at his house, with one of the sons of Lorenzo Venturini, Camillo, striking the first blow. Matteo Pannilini was tortured, interrogated, and executed on 6 August.³ About thirty Popolari were considered to merit punishment by *ammonizione* (in most cases for life), and eighteen of them were also sentenced to exile, for periods ranging from four months to ten years. Most had been more prominent in organizing intimidation and looting than in political councils.⁴ After those sentences had been decided, a general amnesty was declared on 13 August. There were to be no further enquiries made into anything that had been done up to that day, it was decreed; in future, men should live quietly and look to their trade and their business concerns.⁵ There was no mass exile of Popolari, or general proscription of them. The emphasis was on reconciliation and inclusion, not on punishment and ostracism. In discussions about the structure of the new regime, the expulsion of the Monte del Popolo from the *reggimento* does not seem to have come under consideration.

Leading exiles had laid their plans carefully. They had not just thought about how to return to Siena, but about what should be done once they had returned, what kind of government they wanted there to be. Formal agreements had been reached between leading

¹ Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 94r–93bisr; Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 355–61; Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 821–2; ASS, Balia 35, ff. 1r–3r; Concistoro 725, ff. 17v–18r.

² ASS, Balia 35, f. 33r; Balia 38, f. 18r.

³ Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 338, 364–5; Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 822; ASS, Concistoro 725, f. 32r; Balia 35, ff. 2r–3r, 4v, 9v, 13v; Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, p. 196.

⁴ The sentences were decided by a commission of six members of the Balia appointed on 27 July. (ASS, Balia 35, ff. 17v–19v.)

⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 20v–21r.

members of the various *monti* in exile in late 1486 or early 1487, making peace between the Nove and the Riformatori, and the Nove and the Dodici. Francesco Severini and his brothers promised to act in concert with the Nove, but only on their own behalf, not on behalf of all the Popolari.⁶ Two years earlier, when the exiles in Rome had been confident they would be back inside Siena in a month, they had declared that they would take revenge on less than twenty people. 'They wanted to embrace everyone', they said, 'but they did want to be the principals (*i primi*)'.⁷

The men who had organized the return of the exiles in July 1487 became known as '*quelli della impresa*' ('those of the enterprise'). They were mostly Noveschi—Antonio Bichi, Niccolo Borghesi, Neri Placidi, Leonardo Bellanti, Giacoppo Petrucci, Bulgarino Bulgarini, and Buonaventura Pini—who acted together with the Popolare Francesco Severini and the Gentiluomo Jacomo di Nanni Tolomei.⁸ No Riformatori or Dodici are known to have been included in '*quelli della impresa*', despite the pacts of reconciliation that had been made: this was a separate group from those who organized the pacts, though four men (Niccolo Borghesi, Neri Placidi, Leonardo Bellanti and Francesco Severini) were involved in both groups. All of '*quelli della impresa*' would be members of Balie, and they included some of the most important political figures of the new regime. Whether this group had concerted detailed plans for how they wanted the new regime to be structured, and how far the regime established by the end of 1487 would conform to what they might have had in mind, is not known.⁹

Inevitably, the problem of what share each monte should have in the *reggimento* was the most pressing. Should there be one government monte, or more than one? If there were to be several, how were offices to be divided among them? The new Balia of 51 members that was submitted for the approval of the Council of the People on 27 July was based on three government *monti*,¹⁰ with the Gentiluomini

⁶ Tizio, '*Historiarum senensium*', VI, pp. 174–5.

⁷ ASS, Balia 522, 26: Guidantonio Buoninsegni, 22 Apr. 1485, Rome.

⁸ ASF, MAP 19, 585: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 10 June 1494, Siena.

⁹ See Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 218–33, and Riccardo Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena dal Medioevo all'Età moderna. La continuità repubblicana al tempo dei Petrucci (1487–1525)* (Siena, 2002), pp. 31–53, for the establishment of the structure of the new regime.

¹⁰ ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, f. 153r–v.

joining the Nove and the Dodici joining the Riformatori.¹¹ This arrangement had been decided by the Provvigionati who chose the Balìa, but it was soon evident that it displeased many Nove and Riformatori, who resented having to share with the Gentiluomini and the Dodici the proportion of offices they had been accustomed to enjoy, while the Popolari, towards whom many felt aggrieved, would enjoy a full third share.¹² Soon discussion began to try to find a more satisfactory arrangement. A completely different scheme was adopted when the Council of the People was reorganized in September, to balance the numbers of riseduti each monte had. This meant reducing the numbers of Popolari riseduti by about 80, and electing additional Gentiluomini, Riformatori and Dodici, so that in the end the Nove, Popolo and Riformatori had 180 riseduti each, and the Gentiluomini and Dodici 90 each. It was the Council of the People who decided who should go and who should be brought in. The selection of the Popolari was made by a scrutiny of those who had become riseduti since 1480; most of the 95 chosen to stay were recognizably not members of the *popolo minuto*, but came from established families of riseduti.¹³ When this process was completed there should have been 720 riseduti, considerably more than there had been mid-century, even allowing for the fact that there were now five monti in the *reggimento*, not three.¹⁴

¹¹ ASS, Balìa 35, f. 5v.

¹² Léon-G. Pélissier, 'Documents siennois de la collection Podocataro', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 6 (1899), pp. 405–8: Lorenzo Giustiniani to Innocent VIII, 11 Aug. 1487, Siena. That the Provvigionati should have decided on a scheme open to such obvious criticism is perhaps explained by the fact that, unusually, the original twenty Provvigionati included equal numbers from each of the five monti, who then co-opted a further member from each monte, and then three more Popolari (including Andrea Piccolomini). This meant that in the final group of twenty-eight, the five Nove and five Riformatori were outnumbered by the five Gentiluomini and five Dodici and the eight Popolari.

¹³ They included three sons of Paolo di Gherardo, two nephews of Alberto Aringhieri (including Fazio, one of those who had occupied Monteriggioni in February 1483), three Capacci (two sons of Conte Capacci, one of Andrea), two sons of Bartolomeo Landucci, three brothers of Francesco Severini, Conte, Roberto and Sozzino, three Venturini, including Camillo di Lorenzo, and Andrea, the son of Francesco del Marretta. They also included the artist Francesco di Giorgio. The Balìa also voted on 3 September to eliminate six Popolari who had been riseduti before 1480. All but one of those they selected had served on at least one Balìa since June 1482; the most prominent man they chose was the lawyer Ricco Ricchi. (ASS, Concistoro 726, ff. 5v–7r; ASS, Balìa 35, ff. 33r, 35v; 'Diario senese', f. 48r.)

¹⁴ See above, pp. 7–8.

Another option, to have a single government monte again, was the one that was finally adopted in October. This was not put forward as an attempt to return to the Popolare regime; some former Nove exiles were among its advocates. It was accepted largely because, when separate assemblies of each monte were held to discuss the idea, the Nove agreed to a proposal drafted by the Balìa, and the other monti agreed to go along with the wishes of the Nove.¹⁵ Provisions instituting the new regime were passed by the Council of the People on 5 December, by 228 votes to 76.¹⁶ What the new regime should officially be called had yet to be decided, it was noted. It was not described as a popular government, and there was no invocation of the *popolo*, as there had been when a single monte was instituted in March 1483.¹⁷ The excesses of the Popolare regime had discredited the rhetoric, and perhaps even the idea, of the *popolo* as the legitimating basis of the political system.

On the other hand, the experiences of the past few years had encouraged some members of the Sienese political elite to think of themselves as a kind of aristocracy. Noveschi exiles vainly hoping for the help of the Spanish King Ferdinand in 1485 described themselves as 'we optimates' ('noi ottimati').¹⁸ Not that the Nove in particular would have needed exile by a Popolare regime to encourage them to see themselves as superior, in the opinion of some Sienese. Anxious to impress upon those in Rome who might sympathize with the exiles in 1483 that the *popolo* could never be persuaded to allow the Nove back into the government, the Balìa denounced the 'innate perfidy' of the Nove, 'who have always aspired to be monarchs and to be on their own, annihilating all the good citizens and the rest of the *popolo*'.¹⁹ More specifically, according to an investigation in October 1482 of the background to the events of the summer of 1480, the intention of those associated with the Duke of Calabria

¹⁵ Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, p. 210.

¹⁶ ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, ff. 162r–164v, published by Riccardo Terziani in 'L'instaurazione del regime oligarchico-signorile (1487–1488)', in Mario Ascheri (ed.), *Siena e il suo territorio nel Rinascimento III* (Siena, 2000), pp. 201–6.

¹⁷ See above, p. 77.

¹⁸ ASS, Archivio Sergardi-Biringucci, G1c, copy of instructions to Tommaso Giffre.

¹⁹ 'la loro innata perfidia che . . . sempre hanno aspirato a monarchia et esser soli anihilando tutti li buoni cittadini et tutto l'altro popolo' (ASS, Balìa 404, f. 234r: Balìa to Andreuccio Ghinucci, Bishop of Sovana, 2 Nov. 1483).

had been to 'reduce the government to sixteen, like in Bologna, and bring it about that only the Nove should be called *signori*'.²⁰

Those seeking to give a more oligarchic cast to the government of Siena in the late 1480s and 1490s were not aiming to make the Monte dei Nove into the ruling elite in Siena,²¹ but rather to establish a small group of men as the permanent heads of the government. The model that they had in mind was again probably the Sixteen of Bologna, the group who had received papal sanction for their life-long tenure of posts on the main executive committee of Bologna's communal government.²² This was the model mentioned by an anonymous Siennese chronicler, apparently a Novesco.²³ Outlining the plans of the group at the heart of the regime, Giacoppo Petrucci confided to the agent of Piero de' Medici—claiming he was breaking an oath in revealing this—that they intended to bring about the reduction of the Balìa to sixteen or eighteen men, who would all be of one mind and keep the government firmly in their hands, while leaving the routine administration to the Concistoro and the councils.²⁴

Giacoppo Petrucci was one of 'quelli della impresa'. Were they behind the proposal for a Balìa lasting five years, and the list of names for appointment to it forced on the Council of the People on 24 October 1487? With seven of the nine members of 'quelli della impresa' on the list—and the two who were not included, co-opted onto the Balìa within a year—it is plausible that they were at least among the promoters. Unfortunately, there are no other clues to who were the sponsors of this measure, an important milestone in Siennese political life. The Council only agreed after several ballots, and after the Campo had been filled by the infantry guard, the *provisionati della piazza*, who had been taken on following the return

²⁰ 'volendo ridurre el regimento a sedici al modo di Bologna, et fare che si avesse a dire signori Nove et non altro' (Cantoni, 'Frammento di un diario senese', p. 921).

²¹ Compare David L. Hicks, 'The Siennese oligarchy and the rise of Pandolfo Petrucci, 1487–97', in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: politica, economia, cultura, arte* (Pisa, 1996), III, pp. 1051–72, who views this regime as one dominated by 'Nove extremists . . . grimly, impacably determined to wreak vengeance on their oppressors, and compensate themselves handsomely in money, property, and a variety of official perquisites' (p. 1054), and who had 'virtually complete control of the government' (p. 1056).

²² See below, pp. 186–91.

²³ Petra Pertici, 'Per la datazione del *Libro d'ore* di Filiziana Bichi', in Mario Ascheri (ed.), *Siena e il suo territorio nel Rinascimento III* (Siena, 2000), p. 163.

²⁴ ASF, MAP 19, 586: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 12 June 1494, Siena.

of the exiles, accompanied by citizens with weapons under their mantles. Some thought there was no need for a Balia at all, others that if there were to be a Balia, its members should be elected by a scrutiny, as usual, and that it should hold office for only a few months.²⁵

The 24 men on the list (six Nove, Riformatori and Popolari, three Gentiluomini and Dodici) were supposed to be confirmed in office each year.²⁶ Nevertheless, on 29 July 1488 the Council of the People agreed that the members of the Balia would not have to do this, but could elect who they chose (including themselves) and as many as they chose for their five year term, and that their authority would not be subject to any limitations at all.²⁷ The Captain of the People who steered this through was a member of the Balia and one of 'quelli della impresa', Jacomo di Nanni Tolomei. No justification was given for this measure, only the comment that they could do as they thought fit for the peace of the city and the *reggimento*. But a letter written on behalf of the Balia a few days before hints at one reason for it, and perhaps gives a clue as to why it should have been accepted. 'Despite the errors of some people we will secure and confirm the stability of our city by any means we can.'²⁸ The longing for peace and security felt by many Siense was helping the advocates of oligarchy to achieve their ends. Better a long-term Balia than continued civic strife, would be the calculation they made.²⁹

In fact there were repeated indications of disaffection and discontent with the new regime throughout 1488. In February a conspiracy that the Balia said was intended to expel the Nove from the *reggimento* was revealed, although at least one of those suspected of involvement was himself a Novesco, Tommaso Fecini. Eighteen men were exiled, more fled.³⁰ In June there were arrests, mostly of minor *popolari*, and more exiles. One man, known as 'el Calvaia', was hanged—it was suspected that he might have been paying the price for his part in the harassment and looting of the Nove during the Popolare regime.

²⁵ Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, p. 207.

²⁶ ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, ff. 158v–159r.

²⁷ ASS, Concistoro 731, f. 14r–v.

²⁸ ASS, Balia 408, f. 84v: Balia to Sinolfo da Castel'Ottieri, 26 July 1488.

²⁹ Hicks argues that 'Rule by Balia was considered acceptable, even desirable, if the magistrature's mandate was adhered to.' (Hicks, 'The Siense oligarchy', p. 1061, note 40.) His understanding of attitudes to the Balia is influenced by his error in believing that it was a permanent part of government from 1455–56 (*ibid.*, p. 1056).

³⁰ Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 384–5; 'Diario senese', ff. 62v–63r; ASS, Balia 408, f. 20r: Balia to Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, 22 Feb. 1487(8).

'Now take example from this, my son', warned one Sienese *popolare* diarist, 'and don't you get mixed up in politics unless you are called on by the authorities, and never take anyone else's property unjustly'.³¹ Some troops under the command of Jacopo d'Appiano, the lord of Piombino, had been brought into the city to reinforce the infantry guard after the discovery of the conspiracy earlier in the year, and this caused tension with the *popolari*. Another man, Sciamanna, was executed for trying to raise a cry for the return of the Popolare exiles, when a joust organized by the troops turned into a *mêlée*.³² After this, a decree approved by the Balìa on 27 August 1488 forbade in comprehensive terms any criticism of the regime, as well as any incitements to change it or to rouse the people to arms.³³ In October, they restricted the right to carry arms to all *riseduti* and their closest male relations, and to 150–200 selected men from each *terzo* who could carry them 'when necessary'.³⁴ That month a scheme was being discussed to bring back the Riformatori exiles and then to bear down on the *popolari*: one of the most prominent Novesco members of the Balìa went to Florence to sound out whether Lorenzo de' Medici would support it.³⁵

Nothing came of this, although concessions to the exiles were approved by the Balìa in November, with many sentences being eased or reduced, and some of the exiles given permission to return. The reason given for these concessions was 'the great desire of all the citizens that all dissension and disturbances should be brought to peace, union and tranquillity of the present *reggimento*'.³⁶ Questioned by the Milanese and Neapolitan ambassadors in Rome about the divisions among the Sienese, Bartolomeo Sansedoni, the Sienese ambassador there, rejected their description of the *monti* as 'factions', and stressed that 'all the worthy men' were 'united body and soul'. Telling Crescenzo Gori, one of the exiles, about the concessions, Sansedoni warned him when he seemed less than grateful, that there were few in Siena who did not want all its citizens to enjoy their

³¹ 'non t'impacci mai di reggimento se non sei chiamato dal pubrico': 'Diario senese', f. 63v.

³² Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 234–5.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 235–6; ASS, Balìa 36, f. 13r–v.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 31r.

³⁵ ASMo, ASE, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Firenze, b. 6: Aldobrandino Guidoni to Ercole d'Este, 11 Oct. 1488, Florence.

³⁶ ASS, Balìa 36, ff. 53r–54v.

homeland, 'especially those who don't need to get property and a place in the government by upheavals'.³⁷ The 'men of worth who constitute the government'³⁸ were strengthening their mutual ties by arranging marriages.³⁹ Sansedoni's emphasis on the 'huomini da bene' who he said now governed Siena, and whom he contrasted with those who could only gain power by causing trouble, was significant. The term was usually used for men of substance and reputation, the sort of men who in the past had been considered best suited to hold important offices like that of Captain of the People.⁴⁰ Now it was apparent that significant numbers of Sienese citizens, and not just Noveschi, held the view that such men should not only hold the most eminent positions in the government, but that they should constitute the government, or at least direct it. It was also apparent that many citizens did not share this view, and were uneasy at the changes in the nature of the Sienese government that were taking place. This opposition would gather strength in the early 1490s, causing considerable problems for the oligarchically-inclined principals of the regime.

Forming a clear understanding of what was happening is hindered by the loss of the deliberations of the Balìa for the periods from October 1487 to July 1488, and from August 1489 to May 1492. This means that deliberations for only one year, from August 1488 to July 1489, of the term of this, the first of the five-year Balie, survives. These long-term Balie were obviously crucial to the strategy of those who wanted to make the government of Siena more oligarchic. They did not just represent a step in the right direction; such Balie, endowed as they were with wide powers, were an instrument that could be used to shape developments—which makes it even more frustrating not to know exactly who promoted the idea of appointing the Balìa for five years, or who drew up the list of members forced on the Council of the People in October 1487.

All but three of the twenty-four men on that list were members of the Balìa that had been elected in July.⁴¹ Prominent men from

³⁷ 'quelli che non hanno bisogno d'avere robba et conditioni di stato cole novità'.

³⁸ 'homini da bene ne' quali consiste il governo'.

³⁹ ASS, Balìa 536, 50, 53: Bartolomeo Sansedoni, 24, 25 Nov. 1488, Rome.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Shaw, 'Provisions following "Proposte generali"', p. 135.

⁴¹ Of the three new members, one was a prominent Popolare, Bartolomeo Landucci (who had been among the electors of the July Balìa), one was Nastoccio Saracini, who had been named in January 1486 as knowing of intrigues to bring back the exiles, and the third was the Dodicino banker, Ambrogio Spannocchi.

all the *monti* were included. All of the Nove, *Riformatori* and *Popolari* members, except two, had had close relatives who had been members of *Balie* before them. One of the exceptions was Andrea Piccolomini, whose family (like those of the members representing the *Gentiluomini* and *Dodici*) would not have been eligible for a seat on *Balie*, and the other was Luca Vieri, a *Riformatore* grocer (*speciale*) who had been a frequent member of *Balie* from 1477 to 1480, and from 1482. As with earlier *Balie*, not all members would be equally influential or equally assiduous in attending meetings. Some would be absent from Siena for long periods. But for those who had long-term aims and policies they wished to pursue, as long as they were members of the *Balia* or had sufficient allies who were members, the five-year *Balie* did provide the opportunity to work towards their goals. It was now possible for there to be a cabal, planning not only to influence policy but to change the structure and nature of the government, working within the institutions of government. They were not obliged to conspire and to turn to violence, as the would-be oligarchs of the 1450s had done.

If by late 1488 ‘*quelli della impresa*’ were all members of the *Balia*, and if, as seems probable, they shared a desire for a more oligarchic form of government in Siena, nevertheless they did not form such a coherent, directing group. Some spent long periods away from Siena. Neri Placidi looked after his business interests in the kingdom of Naples for months at a time, for example. Niccolo Borghesi served as ambassador in Rome for terms in 1488, 1489 and 1490, and held office in 1490 as papal governor of Rieti and Terni—but he always kept a close watch on what was happening in Siena. Some men who were not among ‘*quelli della impresa*’ were very influential, such as Borghese Borghesi. As a member of the *Balia*, he was responsible for supervising the republic’s spies, and much involved in matters concerning the exiles. His death in September 1490 was marked by three days of public mourning, and his funeral was attended by the magistracies of the city and by the trade guilds.⁴² Pandolfo Petrucci, younger brother of Giacoppo, was another man who carried weight in Siennese political life, but he was not a member of the *Balia*. Pandolfo and Giacoppo, Borghese Borghesi, Leonardo Bellanti and Francesco Severini were, according to Andrea da Foiano, an

⁴² Tommasi, *Dell'Historie di Siena*, II, pp. 393–4; N. Mengozzi, ‘Il Pontefice Paolo II ed i Sanesi (1464–1471)’, *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 21 (1914), pp. 220–1.

agent of Lorenzo de' Medici, 'all of one mind and one will', although he was probably referring specifically to their attitude to Florence, rather than commenting on their general political stance. Neri Placidi, on the other hand, was regarded with some suspicion because of his close association with Naples.⁴³

After the death of Borghese Borghesi and the return to Siena of Niccolo Borghesi, Andrea da Foiano reported on the possible impact of Niccolo's return. He had a good reputation and credit, and a considerable following among the *primi*, the most important citizens. If he stayed in Siena, he would not lack authority, and would be the most likely competitor to Antonio Bichi, who 'keeps to himself the management of internal and external affairs, together with the *primi*, especially Giacoppo and Pandolfo'. For the moment at least, these four were acting together.⁴⁴ By late 1491, these four men—Niccolo Borghesi, Antonio Bichi, Giacoppo and Pandolfo Petrucci—with Niccolo's half-brother Leonardo Bellanti, had formed a stable group of five, working together to impose their will on Siennese politics and government. All were Noveschi, all were former exiles, four of them were among 'quelli della impresa' and those four were in the Balìa. The two pairs of brothers—Giacoppo and Pandolfo, and Niccolo and Leonardo—were linked by the marriage of Pandolfo to Niccolo's daughter Aurelia.

Frequently riven by quarrels and jealousies and rivalries, the five could disagree on important matters of policy, such as the attitude that should be adopted to the exiles, but they would stick together as a group until the regime was shaken by the repercussions in Siena of the French invasion of Naples.⁴⁵ They met together regularly, often in the house of Antonio Bichi (who lived next door to Giacoppo Petrucci near the cathedral, while Pandolfo lived only a stone's throw away).⁴⁶ Although they did not always succeed in presenting a united

⁴³ ASF, MAP 26, 524: Andrea da Foiano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 30 Oct. 1489, Siena.

⁴⁴ ASF, MAP 41, 471: Andrea da Foiano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 7 Mar. 1490(1), Siena.

⁴⁵ See below, pp. 116–21.

⁴⁶ For the grouping, and rebuilding, of the palaces of the leading figures in the regime, see Fabrizio Nevola, 'Creating a stage for an urban elite: the re-development of the Via del Capitano and Piazza Postierla in Siena (1487–1520)', in Stella Fletcher and Christine Shaw (eds), *The World of Savonarola: Italian Elites and Perceptions of Crisis* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 182–93, and plate 14.2.

front, they deliberately tried to work out their differences and formulate an agreed policy before matters would be put before the Balia for consideration. Each had specific functions that could enhance the influence of the group as well as their individual standing. Antonio Bichi had charge of the correspondence of the Balia, while Niccolò Borghesi was officially secretary of the republic (exactly what duties that entailed was not clear even to contemporaries). Leonardo Bellanti had taken over Borghese Borghesi's task of supervising Siennese spies, and would be given charge of the men at arms. Pandolfo had charge of the infantry guard, the *provisionati della piazza*, and sat on the important police and public order committee, the Nine of Ward (his membership was carried over from year to year). Giacoppo's speciality was maintaining the liaison with Lorenzo de' Medici, and after Lorenzo's death in April 1492, with his son Piero. This association with the Medici was important to all the group; they turned to Lorenzo and Piero for advice, loans, the use of troops. Giacoppo in particular felt that his reputation as a friend of the Medici was a vital support to his political standing in Siena. It is the Medici correspondence, and in particular the many reports from Siena of Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici from 1492 to 1494, that reveal how this group operated, how they sought to manipulate the system and to what ends, and the sometimes difficult relations among them.⁴⁷

Antonio Bichi was chosen by the Balia to serve as Captain of the People in January and February 1492, in order to steer through its extension for a further five years. The Council of the People agreed on 20 February, by 399 votes to 65, that the authority of the present Balia should be continued for five more years, with the same powers, and that the members of the Balia could co-opt replacements for any of their colleagues who died, and elect any extra members that they chose.⁴⁸ There is no record of any strong objection to this, or that any show of force was needed to obtain the Council's agreement. In the light of the strong opposition to the Balia that would be expressed the following year, this is perhaps surprising, unless the abuses that aroused such ire became more marked, or more evident, only after the members of the Balia felt their power to be secure for the next several years.

⁴⁷ These reports are in ASF, MAP, especially MAP 19. See Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 244–73; and Christine Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci il Magnifico, signore di Siena (1487–1500)* (Siena, 2001), pp. 37–66.

⁴⁸ ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, f. 232r.

While not all the volumes of the Balia's deliberations for 1492–7 have survived, there is much more information about its workings during the second term than during the first.⁴⁹ It can be seen from these records that much of the business of the Balia was handled by special ad hoc commissions, usually with three to six members, to deal with anything from finding men to lend money to the commune, negotiating a contract with a *condottiere*, or dealing with Corsican brigands, to settling a private dispute. For the most part these commissions did not have to refer their decisions back to the full Balia for approval. One special commission has been seen as a lynchpin of this regime—the three (or four) Segreti appointed to keep an eye on threats to the government and public order. Appointed by secret ballot for a year at a time, they were supposed to be known only to the notary of the Balia. Although their mode of operation was disliked, they were not an all-powerful secret police committee spreading fear throughout Siena.⁵⁰ From the deliberations of the Balia in which their decisions were recorded, they appear to have dealt often with comparatively trivial matters. On occasion, they were officially rebuked by the Balia, either for exceeding their powers by interfering with cases outside their jurisdiction, or for not being zealous enough. One instance of abuse of their power that is known indicates that the membership of the Segreti was not a closely-kept secret, and that people were not afraid to criticise them. Francesco Severini had a private quarrel with some of the Capacci, and after one of the Capacci had passed by his house shouting threats and insults, Severini, who was one of the four Segreti, had him sentenced to a year in exile and fined 100 ducats. This caused some adverse comment on Francesco Severini, and a month later he was given authority by the Segreti to absolve Pierluigi Capacci from the sentence of exile and fine.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The volume for February to August 1496 is missing, and that for August 1494 to July 1495, but for that crucial period there is a small volume of the notary's rough notes of the meetings, which in some ways is even more informative, recording the contributions of individual members, for example.

⁵⁰ David Hicks also considers the reputation of the Segreti as 'the directing intelligence behind the Balia's every act', was 'certainly an exaggeration': Hicks, 'The Sienese oligarchy', p. 1058; but Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, describes the Segreti as a 'terrifying' arm of the government (p. 116).

⁵¹ ASF, MAP 19, 378: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 7 June 1493, Siena; ASS, Balia 39, ff. 2r, 4v. The letter refers to Gianluigi Capacci, the Balia to Pierluigi, but it is evidently the same man.

An important commission whose membership is not known, because they were apparently appointed during that part of 1492 for which the volume of *Balia* deliberations has been lost, was the Five of *Balia*. When the next surviving volume opens at the beginning of June 1492, the 'Magnificent Five of the College of the *Balia* of the city of Siena' were meeting much more frequently than the full *Balia*, and appear to have been delegated extensive powers and to be taking decisions on a whole range of matters—the custody of fortresses, taxes, the Palace musicians, authorizing property deals, ordering payments.⁵² Giacoppo Petrucci may have been one of the members. In June he was promising Alessandro Braccesi that 'we principals who have all the authority of the whole *Balia*' would have a public document drawn up concerning the *condotta* of Jacopo d'Appiano.⁵³

Many of the decisions concerning communal property and payments of public money made by the Five of *Balia* were for the benefit of private individuals. As their term of office drew to an end in October 1492, the flow of grants and favours was in full spate. On 29 October alone petitions from subject communes were heard, officials substituted, appointments made to the university, grants of money were made. Seven hundred florins were given to Giovanni Borghesi, for 'some damages he had suffered and because of his merits', for example, 400 florins to Antonio Bichi, as compensation for damages he had suffered when the *Nove* were expelled. A dispute over a credit to Paolo Salvetti (who had helped the *Nove* exiles return) was settled in his favour and it was declared that he could not be troubled about this matter any more. Several concessions were made in favour of Pandolfo Petrucci. On 15 October he was given the commune's share of any buried treasure whose hiding place a 'secret friend' had declared he knew; and on 26 October he was credited with 1,400 florins from the communal treasury (the *Biccherna*) as compensation for property confiscated from Ghino Bellanti, as Pandolfo was declared an heir of Ghino's son Cristoforo. In the jamboree on 29 October he was given several prizes, including permission to buy the communal property of several settlements in Siennese territory. Many of the grants and concessions made were to members of the *Balia*.⁵⁴ They provide a graphic illustration of how public patronage could

⁵² ASS, *Balia* 37, *passim*.

⁵³ ASF, MAP 19, 31: Alessandro Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 27 June 1492, Siena.

⁵⁴ ASS, *Balia* 37, ff. 88r–104v.

be used to enrich a privileged circle, and of how unscrupulous and greedy some men—and Pandolfo Petrucci was conspicuous in this regard—could be in taking advantage of these opportunities.

Another source of profit and patronage was the distribution of offices by the Balìa to themselves, to members of their family and their friends, as a favour or a reward. Appointments to offices were also being used as a way of raising revenue. There was a commission of six ‘for granting offices for payment’ (*ad concedendum officia ad taleas*), whose membership is not known; they may have been in office for some time by the summer of 1492. The opportunities for the exercise of patronage and for corruption offered by this change from the traditional system of appointment by sortition are obvious. While it provided benefits for a favoured few, it disappointed many Sienese who could have hoped for their turn to come round, and it was not popular.

Resentment of abuses was increased by the fact that while some were growing rich from public money, the commune was heavily in debt. Since the return of the exiles, Leonardo Bellanti said in November 1492, they had had to deal with a debt of over 200,000 ducats.⁵⁵ One of the justifications for the sales of communal property that proved so lucrative for the privileged few was to help pay off the debt.⁵⁶ As all the communal revenues were needed for current expenditure, the Balìa agreed in January 1493, it was necessary to sell off some property of the commune to reduce the republic’s debts; none of the Balìa were to be permitted to bid, in person or by proxy, on this occasion. Offices in Sienese territory were to be sold for the next four years, because ‘it is fitting that in time of need citizens should help the republic especially when it is with some advantage and honour to them’.⁵⁷ The Balìa were reluctant to raise direct taxation, because the Sienese were even more reluctant to pay it, and the Balìa did not want to court trouble. When a new tax assessment, the *alliramento*, was published in July 1493, there was such an uproar of complaints and criticisms of ‘those who govern’ that troops were hastily brought to the city.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ ASF, MAP 19, 173: A. Braccesi to P. de’ Medici, 30 Nov. 1492, Siena.

⁵⁶ ASF, MAP 60, 23: A. Braccesi to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 26 Mar. 1492, Siena.

⁵⁷ ASS, Balìa 38, ff. 42r–52r.

⁵⁸ ASF, MAP 19, 404: A. Braccesi to Piero de’ Medici, 17 July 1493, Siena; see Shaw, ‘Politics and institutional innovation’, 104 (1997), pp. 249–58, for the regime’s financial problems.

Soldiers were in fact the major cause of expense to the government. Supporters of the regime felt that they enhanced its security and its reputation.⁵⁹ There was as much concern for internal security as for protection against external enemies, including Sienese exiles. After the limitation on the right to carry arms ordered in 1488, much tighter restrictions, aiming in effect to disarm the *popolo*, were imposed the following year. Good citizens had no desire to carry weapons to harm others, the Balìa declared in August 1489; only the members of the Balìa and their households, and those holding offices such as the Nine of Ward, were to be permitted to go about armed. Only *riseduti* and those relatives living with them could keep weapons in their homes.⁶⁰ Others were to be allowed to keep only one sword each, while their other weapons were to be handed in to the communal armoury. This order was much resented, and evaded; some buried, sold or even destroyed their weapons rather than hand them in.⁶¹ Association with the troops of the republic—the infantry guard, the *provisionati della piazza*, as well as the men at arms—was one of the pillars of the position of the cabal of five. The large sums of money involved brought them opportunities for profit, but also the periodic headache of finding enough cash to keep the men content. One expedient was to ask Piero de' Medici to arrange a loan from Florence, even to put up the money himself, although they tried to keep these requests quiet. They knew that the reaction of many Sienese would be that if they could not find the money to pay the soldiers, then they should dismiss them rather than go cap in hand to others.⁶²

In the summer of 1493, dissatisfaction with the regime became more open and vocal, encouraged by news of discord among the cabal as to whether the contract of the main Sienese commander, Jacopo d' Appiano, should be continued or not. Leonardo Bellanti, who had charge of the men at arms, was insistent that it should be, and had his half-brother Niccolò Borghesi on his side; Giacoppo Petrucci and Antonio Bichi were of the opposite opinion; Pandolfo

⁵⁹ ASF, MAP 19, 170: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 22 Dec. 1492, Siena.

⁶⁰ ASS, Balìa 409, ff. 172v–173r.

⁶¹ 'Diario senese', ff. 65v–66r.

⁶² ASF, MAP 19, 92: A. Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 20 June 1492, Siena; Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 249–52, 256–7; and see below, pp. 270–1.

had yet to come down on either side. The calculated exile of three of the most vocal critics—of good family but not men of importance, one Popolare, one Novesco and one Riformatore—failed to silence the malcontents. Above all the behaviour of the cabal was causing offence, the way in which ‘they have arrogated everything to themselves without regard to others . . . they alone want to do everything and they have left no scope or any decision to the Concistoro . . . or the councils.’⁶³

The Concistoro and the Council of the People had indeed been pushed to the sidelines. Any matter of importance was dealt with by the Balìa by decree, and only exceptionally was put before the Council of the People for approval. Occasionally the Balìa referred matters, particularly petitions from communities in Sienese territory, to the Concistoro, as though they were delegating business to a subordinate committee.⁶⁴ They even approved the Concistoro’s routine expenses, and when these routinely exceeded the amount set aside for them, made provisions in July 1493 for extra income to make up the shortfall, ‘to save the honour of the Magnificent lords’.⁶⁵ But the Concistoro had the capacity to take the initiative, and could constitute a challenge to the Balìa, especially if led by a determined Captain of the People. Those drawn to be Captain who were not already members of the Balìa, joined it for their term of office—an arrangement perhaps intended as a way of keeping a check on the attitude of the incumbent Captain as much as a recognition of the dignity of his position.⁶⁶ When the name of Bartolomeo Sozzini was drawn in late February 1493 to be the next Captain of the People, the cabal, who did not trust him, called down into the courtyard of the Palace those members of the Balìa they felt they could rely on, until they had enough support for a proposal that his name should be replaced in the purse, on the pretext that he would not be able to serve because he was at Pisa.⁶⁷ When he did next serve as Captain of the People in May and June 1494, his behaviour would show that their fears had not been groundless.

⁶³ ASF, MAP 19, 414: A. Braccesi to P. de’ Medici, 18 Aug. 1493, Siena.

⁶⁴ ASS, Balìa 38, f. 15v.

⁶⁵ ASS, Balìa 39, ff. 15v–16r.

⁶⁶ ASS, Balìa 36, f. 74v. This arrangement had been in place during earlier Balie as well.

⁶⁷ He was lecturing at the university there. ASF, MAP 19, 65: A. Braccesi to P. de’ Medici, 25 Feb. 1493, Siena.

The Balìa tried to contain the growing discontent by a decree passed on 13 August 1493, defining its own powers in relation to those of the other councils, 'so that the present regime shall be more secure and better able to perpetuate itself, and the citizens of our *reggimento* should participate in the public benefits and honours.' Any business concerning exiles, or those who attempted anything against the regime, negotiation of leagues with other powers, peace or war, or troops (including the infantry guard) and the money assigned for their payment, had to be dealt with by the Balìa first. There were to be no *proposte generali* without the express permission of the Balìa. The Balìa was to have charge of guarding the city and territory, and of dealing with the reduction of the republic's debts. No one was to propose any limitation on the authority of the Balìa. All other public business should be referred to the Concistoro 'as used to be done'. To prevent loose talk threatening public order, no one was to criticize these provisions, on pain of a fine of 500 florins and *ammonizione* for five years.⁶⁸ Although the Balìa held consultations with groups of citizens about this decree, it failed to appease the malcontents or to silence criticism.⁶⁹

Critics could not be silenced or ignored when they found spokesmen in Cardinal Piccolomini and his brothers Jacopo and Andrea. Jacopo came to Siena from his lands in the Marche of the Papal States, where he spent most of his time, to add his weight to the demands for a return to 'the old way of governing, as more civil and peaceful, that is, everything being freely referred to the councils'.⁷⁰ The heads of the Nove, Riformatori, Gentiluomini and Dodici met together and decided that this was an attempt by the Monte del Popolo to seize the reins of government again, because they were the most numerous monte and the others would have difficulty mustering the two-thirds majority needed in the Council of the People. Having suffered at the hands of the Popolari, they were all determined not to be subject to their power again. When the Piccolomini realized that the other monti were determined to keep the Balìa as a bulwark against a radical Popolare regime, they suggested there should

⁶⁸ ASS, Balìa 39, ff. 24r–26r; published by Mario Ascheri, 'Verso la definizione dell'oligarchia: provvedimenti per i Monti 1493–1498', in Mario Ascheri and Donatella Ciampoli (eds), *Siena e il suo territorio nel Rinascimento I* (Siena, 1986), pp. 349–51.

⁶⁹ ASF, MAP 19, 416: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 22 Aug. 1493, Siena.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 437: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 11 Oct. 1493, Siena.

be an increase in the number of Popolari in the Balìa, but this was seen as a step in the same direction and rejected too. After some weeks of being stonewalled by the leaders of the other monti, the Piccolomini gave up.⁷¹

But the problem of widespread dissatisfaction with the sidelining of the Concistoro and the Council of the People remained. The solution the leaders of the regime tried next was to transform the Council of the People into an effectively closed, hereditary assembly of all the members of the *reggimento*. All the members of all the monti (except the Popolari removed from the Council in 1487) and their descendants were to be members of the Council of the People. A parchment book was to be compiled, with the names of all the members of the *reggimento*, listed by family, and all the monti mixed together. Sons of present or past *riseduti* were to be subject to scrutiny after they reached the age of twenty-two, to determine that they were not unsuitable to join the council because they were of bad character or had some other defect. Such scrutinies were to be carried out by the full Concistoro, the Nine of Ward and the Balìa—if there was one. (This recognition that the Balìa was not a permanent organ of government had been a routine inclusion in legislation mentioning the Balìa in earlier years, but is an interesting feature of this provision.) The Council of the People, it was declared, ‘shall be and shall be called the prince of the city and shall have full power and authority in every matter.’⁷² By the calculation of the notaries of the Balìa, as they totted up the long lists of those whose names had been approved by the scrutiny commission, 579 men were added to the Council of the People.⁷³

The cabal were confident that they had found the way to appease all the members of the monti, and that this measure would strengthen their own position by winning them favour, but they were badly mistaken.⁷⁴ Niccolò Borghesi and Leonardo Bellanti and their followers were behind this, Allegretto Allegretti commented acidly in his diary, ‘hoping to have so many more supporters and votes in the councils,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 438, 439, 442: A. Braccesi to P. de’ Medici, 12, 24 Oct., 19 Nov. 1493, Siena.

⁷² ASS, Balìa 39, ff. 90v–93v; published by Ascheri, ‘Verso la definizione dell’oligarchia’, pp. 351–6.

⁷³ ASS, Balìa 39, ff. 105v–111r, 120v–123v.

⁷⁴ ASF, MAP 19, 223: A. Braccesi to P. de’ Medici, 8 Feb. 1493(4), Siena.

and to get what they want more easily', but 'they have done this against the will of eighty per cent of the men of worth'. Thieves, madmen, murderers, sodomites, blasphemers, had been brought into the Council of the People: 'many of the new *riseduti* and sons of worthy men condemned the *Balia* for what they had done, because they had no doubt they would have entered the Council anyway, and with better repute.'⁷⁵ The first time that the expanded council was summoned only about sixty men turned up. On the other hand, despite the large number of additional members, many who were qualified as descendants of *riseduti* were left out, and they were offended too.⁷⁶

More problems would be caused to the *Balia* by Bartolomeo Sozzini, who showed how much influence the position of Captain of the People could give to a respected individual. Although a member of the *Balia*, he evidently sympathized with those who wanted a return to the old ways of government. During his term of office as Captain of the People in May and June 1494, he held meetings with members of various *monti* to discuss the problem. Seeing the strength of support for reform, the cabal were divided over what should be done. Niccolo Borghesi was strongly opposed to any change, while Antonio Bichi and the Petrucci brothers decided to make at least some demonstration of willingness to meet the objections of their critics, and they brought Leonardo Bellanti, who had initially agreed with Borghesi, over to their side. But the proposals they sponsored were rejected by the Council of the People, because it was felt they gave too many privileges to the current members of the *Balia*, including one that '*quelli della impresa*' should be members of any *Balia* in office throughout their lives.⁷⁷ Giacoppo Petrucci claimed that he and his allies had themselves ensured the proposals would be rejected, because they did not like one clause that nine more members should be added to the *Balia*. This, they felt, would weaken their own hold over the *Balia*; they wanted fewer members, not more. Their goal was a *Balia* of sixteen to eighteen, including some new faces.⁷⁸

A revised set of proposals was accepted by the Council of the People with over 700 present on 17 June, although only by a margin

⁷⁵ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 828.

⁷⁶ ASF, MAP 19, 306: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 21 Mar. 1493(4), Siena.

⁷⁷ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 830-1; ASF, MAP 19, 580, 584: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 4, 6 June 1494, Siena.

⁷⁸ ASF, MAP 19, 586: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 12 June 1494, Siena.

of one vote, on the third ballot. According to Alleghetti, these were drawn up by 'some citizens who were not on the Balìa, all from the Monte dei Nove, and the Captain of the People.'⁷⁹ But the Balìa at least tinkered with them, being particularly concerned about the proposal dealing with grants and sales of salaried office.⁸⁰ The outcome gave some satisfaction to those wanting reform, with provisions made for an audit of the communal finances, a prohibition on future grants or sales of office by the Balìa, and a review to be conducted by the Council of the People of the complicated mass of claims to offices by virtue of existing grants. There was some compensation and reassurance for the Balìa, too. They could appoint three members of the Nine of Ward (and thus Pandolfo Petrucci and Leonardo Bellanti's brother, Luzio, could be kept in that office permanently); the custody of ten fortresses were to be reserved for 'quelli della impresa' for three years (all other grants of fortresses were cancelled); and anyone who had been a member of a Balìa since the return of the Nove in 1487, or of any commissions appointed by the Balìa, that had dealt with public money or property, could not be called to account for what they had done.⁸¹

Neither side regarded these provisions as the definitive settlement. The cabal still expected to control appointments to office. When Petrino Bellanti, the next Captain of the People, failed to obey their instructions concerning nominations, so that most of the successful candidates in elections he supervised in the General Council were not to their liking, Niccolò Borghesi and Leonardo Bellanti wanted to dismiss him from his post and ban him from holding office in future, to prevent him trying to bring about further reforms. Antonio Bichi and the Petrucci had the sense to realize this would not be a good idea.⁸² Such recurrent rifts within the cabal were weakening their position and encouraging their opponents, who felt that they and the Balìa had still not been sufficiently cut down to size.

When the long-heralded expedition of the young French king, Charles VIII, to press his claim to the kingdom of Naples finally became a reality in the autumn of 1494, both the Balìa and their

⁷⁹ Alleghetti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', col. 832.

⁸⁰ ASS, Balìa 39, ff. 163r, 165r.

⁸¹ ASS, Consiglio Generale 240, ff. 259v–261r (published in Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 262–3); ASF, MAP 19, 590: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 18 June 1494, Siena.

⁸² ASF, MAP 19, 615: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 1 Aug. 1494, Siena.

opponents recognized this would be an opportunity for the proponents of change. The Balia tried to ward off trouble from outside Siena by beginning to make arrangements for the return of the exiles, who were appealing to Charles for help, and from inside Siena by allowing the Concistoro and Council of the People a greater share in directing affairs, including the preparations for the passage of Charles and his army through Sienese territory in early December.⁸³ Even after the French had gone on their way, the Balia continued to lose ground. Proposals for reform were again in the air, and the Balia struggled to retain some degree of control over the process. This time the initiative came from within the Monte dei Nove, from men who disapproved of 'the tyrannical ways', the financial abuses, the greed for offices of those at the centre of power. They initiated negotiations for a formal agreement between the Nove and the Monte del Popolo, with Cardinal Piccolomini enthusiastically assisting the talks, and marking their conclusion by a solemn *Te Deum* in the cathedral. The terms agreed were read out, along with a terrific oath (even at the hour of death there could be no spiritual remedy for those who might contravene it), and the Popolari and Noveschi present subscribed the oath and exchanged a kiss of peace.⁸⁴ This agreement proved to be no empty form: in the months to come, the understanding reached between leading Popolari and Noveschi would be of crucial importance.

It may well have influenced the outcome of prolonged discussions over the next two months—in the Balia, in assemblies of citizens convened by the Captain of the People, Francesco Nini, and in the Council of the People—when it was agreed that assemblies of selected Nove and Popolari should deliberate and draw up provisions for reform of the *reggimento*.⁸⁵ They concluded, and the Council of the People agreed on 20 March, that there should once again be three government monti, each to have an equal share in the regime, its honours, offices and benefits. Those three would be the Monti dei Nove, del Popolo and dei Gentiluomini, the latter to include all the Gentiluomini and Dodici and 350 Riformatori; the rest of the Riformatori would be divided between the other two monti or the

⁸³ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 274–5.

⁸⁴ Alleghretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 836–7.

⁸⁵ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 278–9.

Nove could take them all.⁸⁶ Among the adjustments this new *reggimento* necessitated was the addition of members to the Balia to balance the shares of the monti. It was the Balia who decided that there should be sixteen new members, six Nove, nine Popolari and one Gentiluomo; but it was the Council of the People who elected them, on 14 April, from a slate of candidates drawn up by the Concistoro. Among the men elected were some who would not have been the choice of the cabal. Three were recently-returned exiles, the Popolari Agnolo Palmieri, Crescenzo Gori and the Riformatore Conte Luti. Alberto Aringhieri may have been thrown off the Balia in 1488, suspected of complicity in the conspiracy discovered in February that year.⁸⁷ Another Popolare who now joined the Balia was Francesco del Marretta, who had played such a prominent role in important episodes during the 1480s. Among the Noveschi elected was Petrino Bellanti, who would not have been a welcome colleague to his cousin Leonardo. But what would prove to be the most significant new member was Pandolfo Petrucci. His election, given his close association with the unpopular 'tyrannical ways' of the cabal and the Balia, is perhaps surprising at this juncture; but with his brother Camillo serving as one of the priors, he would have had no difficulty securing a nomination for the scrutiny.⁸⁸

One cause of tension that the reform of the *reggimento* had not addressed was the infantry guard. During the discussions between the Nove and the Popolari, there had been debate about whether they should be dismissed. The Nove had insisted they must stay, and the Popolari were prepared to acquiesce to their being kept on for a limited period, eighteen months, although they did want them disbanded in the end.⁸⁹ Some Popolari and Riformatori, however, would not let the issue drop, because they did not like the new order of the *reggimento*, and were prepared to use force to get their way. With the Gentiluomini and Dodici having become peacefully integrated into the *reggimento*, and the Nove and Popolari evidently thinking a quarter share each of offices was not enough, the Riformatori were

⁸⁶ ASS, Concistoro 771, ff. 7r–8v, 56v–58r; Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, p. 266.

⁸⁷ His nephew Francesco Aringhieri was one of the priors who drew up the slate of candidates.

⁸⁸ ASS, Concistoro 771, f. 18r–v.

⁸⁹ BCS, MS. B. III. 2, 'Storie di Siena di vari', ff. 215r–225r, 'Frammento di diario sanese', f. 218r–v.

being squeezed. No leader of the stature or statesmanship of Cristofano Gabrielli had appeared among this generation of Riformatori. In order to press their claim for a recovery of their position, the most active Riformatori, notably several members of the Buoninsegni family, were ready to provoke the kind of street-fighting that had accompanied changes in the regime in the 1480s. They had allies among the Popolari, notably the Severini brothers.

Somehow they gained the support of the French ambassador sent to Siena to prepare for the return of Charles VIII and his army on their way back to France. The ambassador, Jérôme Tinteville, insisted the infantry guard had to leave before the king entered the city, and at last they were sent away on 12 June, the day before his arrival. During an audience the king gave to representatives of the *monti* on 14 June, Jacomo d'Agnolo Buoninsegni and Giovanni Severini asked the king to leave behind him a French captain and guard, and complained about the behaviour of the Nove. Some Gentiluomini and Dodici suspected that the Riformatori wanted them out of the *reggimento*, to clear the way for the recovery of their own position. Demands by the Riformatori for the third share of the *reggimento* they had enjoyed for most of the century, and that the third government monte should bear their name, not that of the Gentiluomini, were not reassuring. Repeated attempts to stir up disturbances in the streets, and the appeal that had been made to the French, only served to harm the Riformatori cause.⁹⁰

What many Sienese wanted now, above all, was a peaceful life. They might well not approve of the dominant position the Balia had assumed, or of the behaviour of its individual members, but they did not want to return to the way politics had been conducted in Siena in the mid-1480s. In a regrettably short surviving fragment of a diary kept by a Popolare, whose sympathies evidently lay with the middling sort of citizens with a little property to protect and a living to earn, the concerns of this section of the population were clearly voiced. He recorded some disquiet about the behaviour of the Balia and debates that it 'should be dismissed for a number of reasons', and how this worried the Nove, but this issue took a distinct second place to his anxiety about the uncertainty aroused by the restive Riformatori, and the damage this caused to merchants and shop-

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 218v–219v; 222r–223r; Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 845–8; Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 283–6.

keepers, whose trade was suffering while they still had rents and wages to pay.⁹¹

This desire to leave political upheavals behind, and to get on with ordinary life and daily business, was one to which the Balìa had tried to appeal to justify the consolidation of their own powers. The controversial revision of the Council of the People in February 1494, for example, had been explained as a measure to extinguish the bad feeling caused by divisions among the *monti*, 'and so that the citizens can turn their attention to their trades.'⁹² Allegretto Allegretti expressed in his diary the feelings of those who were more concerned than the Popolare diarist with the structure of the government. While he denounced the Balìa and the leading *Noveschi* as tyrants, he believed that their *Riformatori* and *Popolari* opponents would be tyrants too, only poorer ones—and therefore by implication, even greedier.⁹³

Concerns about the way the Balìa had governed were addressed by an assembly of *Nove* and *Popolari* in the Palace on 16 June, which agreed that there should be a number of reforms.⁹⁴ Draft provisions were discussed and approved by a larger assembly of *Popolari* and *Noveschi* on 18 June, and then by the Council of the People on 23 June; on both occasions there were only a handful of votes cast against. The first clause dealt with the dismissal of the infantry guard. The *Segreti* of the Balìa were to be abolished, and the ban the Balìa had sought to impose on the *proposta generale* was to be lifted. There were further revocations of grants of fortresses and other offices made by the Balìa, with the rights of those who had actually bought and paid for their offices recognized but limited; and there was to be an examination of the sales of communal revenues. All pensions that had been granted to citizens were cancelled.⁹⁵ These provisions still did not go far enough in curbing the powers of the Balìa to satisfy all concerned. There was a meeting at the Palace to discuss what should be done, but those who attended could not come to any agreement.⁹⁶

⁹¹ 'Frammento di diario sanese', f. 222v.

⁹² Ascheri, 'Verso la definizione dell' oligarchia', p. 352.

⁹³ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 836–7, 851.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, cols 848–9; 'Frammento di diario sanese', ff. 219v–220r.

⁹⁵ 'Frammento di diario sanese', ff 220v–221v; ASS, Concistoro 772, ff. 20v–21v; Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, p. 90.

⁹⁶ 'Frammento di diario sanese', f. 224r.

A French infantry guard had been left behind in Siena when Charles departed on 17 June.⁹⁷ When the Riformatori and their Popolari allies finally made their move in late July and took to the streets, they expected these French troops to back them, but their hopes were disappointed. They were defeated, and the *provisionati della piazza*, who had been kept together, were brought back into the city by Luzio Bellanti. The Nove had been supported in the fighting by the Dodici and the Gentiluomini, and by some of the leading Popolari. On the day the *provisionati* returned, 28 July, there was a dispute among the *monti* as to who should lay down their arms first. As the argument grew heated, Andrea Piccolomini defused the situation by withdrawing, not just from the Campo, but from the city. Hundreds of Popolari, and some Noveschi, including Pandolfo Petrucci, followed him. This was a telling moment. Rather than risk the outbreak of more fighting in the streets of Siena, or the generation of more bad blood among the *monti*, hundreds of Sienese preferred to demonstrate their desire for peace by collectively leaving the city, in a symbolic withdrawal, not a mass exodus into exile. Many others did go into exile—the Riformatori and Popolari who had tried to use force to defeat their opponents and bring about the changes they wanted, but who were forced to recognize that they had failed. Rather than view this as an opportunity to seize power for themselves, the Nove, Gentiluomini and Dodici, who had been left as the victors by default, immediately set about recalling those who had left with Andrea Piccolomini. Most returned the following day. A few days later, the French captain withdrew his troops from the city.⁹⁸

Soon it was back to business as usual for the Balìa, in substance if not in form. On 5 August, on the initiative of the Balìa, the Council of the People agreed to the appointment of a commission of eighteen members of the Balìa who would investigate and punish those found responsible for the recent troubles, and make provision for the well-being of the city and the existing government; their authority was to last to the end of October.⁹⁹ The Concistoro and the Council of the People would be on the sidelines again, the reforms

⁹⁷ The Balìa had asked for some French troops but had wanted men at arms they could use to defend Montepulciano, which had rebelled against Florence and submitted to Siena.

⁹⁸ Allegretti, 'Diarii delle cose sanesi', cols 852–3; 'Diario senese', f. 55r–v.

⁹⁹ ASS, Consiglio Generale 241, f. 15r–v.

of June effectively nullified. But the Sieneſe were tired of ſtrife, and in any caſe the city was emptying as many left to avoid a ſevere epidemic.

The oligarchical regime, with the Balia at its heart, had ſurvived—thanks to the miſtakes of its opponents, in no ſmall meaſure. The radical Popolare regime had diſcredited appeals to the authority of the ‘popolo’. There were no calls to the *popolo minuto* to play a part in the conteſts and diſturbances of 1494–5; and the ‘popolo mezano’, the middling ſort, the ſhopkeepers and proſperous tradesmen and minor profeſſionals had ſhown that their priority was an end to the diſruption cauſed by political ſtrife. The Riformatori—by the manner in which they preſſed their claim for a return to their former ſhare in the *reggimento* as much as by their perſiſtence in that claim—had diſcredited, or at the leaſt tarniſhed, the ideal of the former tripartite regime as the mirror of the heavenly government of the Trinity. If many ſtill hankered after government ‘by the councils’, they were not, at this juncture, prepared to fight for it. The time was ripe for Pandolfo Petrucci to open his bid to turn an oligarchic regime into ſomething approaching a *signoria*.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARDS A SIGNORIA

Pandolfo Petrucci may have had ambitions before to make himself pre-eminent in Siena, but from August 1495, with the Balìa recovering control and Pandolfo now a member of the Balìa, he was in a much better position to realize them. He had been the junior member of the “gang of five” and, until April 1495, the only one not to be on the Balìa. That group seemed to have broken up. Giacoppo Petrucci had apparently retired from active engagement in politics, and while Antonio Bichi, Leonardo Bellanti and Niccolo Borghesi were all still major players, there are no indications that they still worked together as they had done. Pandolfo was seeking new alliances, and to consolidate the network of friendships he had been building up before. He was no longer a member of the Nine of Ward, which had been one of the bases of his personal influence: he was replaced on that body on 12 August 1495.¹ But he did not need that position now. As a member of the Balìa, he kept his control of the infantry guard, and he was able to extend his tentacular grip on the public finances, enjoying even more opportunities for personal profits for himself and his friends.

His rise to a position approaching that of *signore* of Siena—for he never actually attained a fully-fledged *signoria*, never had any institutional sanction or recognition of his supremacy—poses two related questions. How was he able to become the political boss (which is what he effectively was) of Siena? And why did the other members of the Sienese political elite—many of whom did not approve of Pandolfo’s ways—allow him to do it?

Two important elements in how he did it have been mentioned earlier: his control of the infantry guard and his financial expertise. These, too, are related. When the Gentiluomo Giovanni Malavolti, not one of Pandolfo’s supporters, analysed the foundations of his personal influence in November 1497, he singled out as the ‘principal

¹ ASS, Balìa 40, f. 8r.

reason' for it, the fact that 'some years ago he was given the charge of finding money and paying the infantry of the guard', and hence had become involved in managing the public finances.² When the infantry guard had been sent away before Charles VIII came back to Siena in June 1495, there were reports that Pandolfo was afraid. But soon he was on good terms with the French troops who were left behind by the king, and was seen going about the city accompanied by French and Italian soldiers.³ It was not Pandolfo, but Luzio Bellanti, Leonardo's brother, who kept the infantry guard together outside Siena and brought them back to the city. Rather than seek immediately to take charge of them, Pandolfo astutely aligned himself with Andrea Piccolomini and the others who demonstrated they had had enough of Siennese political battles turning into street-fights. For a while after this he had to share control of the guard with Luzio Bellanti, and there are indications of a struggle over this in 1496, when Luzio was plotting against Pandolfo. The captain of the guard was dismissed; wounded by Pietro Borghesi (the man who had taken Pandolfo's place on the Nine of Ward), he found refuge with the Bellanti.⁴

Pandolfo was able to recover sole charge of the guard, which came increasingly to be regarded, not least in Pandolfo's own mind, as a kind of personal guard for him. It was also still regarded by some of the Nove as security for them. As Giovanni Malavolti explained to the Duke of Milan, Lodovico Sforza, those of the Nove who wanted to cut Pandolfo down to size 'could not do this without danger to themselves, especially having the infantry of the guard at his disposal, nor can those infantry be dismissed because of the suspicion these Noveschi have of the strength and power (*grandezza*) of the *popolo*'.⁵ This does not mean that the guard was used by Pandolfo to terrorize the *popolari* or beat up his opponents. It was, rather, protection against attempts to force changes in the regime or the gov-

² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1264: Giovanni Malavolti to Lodovico Sforza, 15 Nov. 1497, Siena.

³ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 42, c. 328: Bindaccio Ricasoli to X di Balìa, 26 June 1495, Gaiuoli.

⁴ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1263: Antonio Stanga to Lodovico Sforza, 23 Apr. 1496, Siena; ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 47, c. 74: Bindaccio Ricasoli to X di Balìa, 6 May 1496, Brolio.

⁵ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1264: Giovanni Malavolti to Lodovico Sforza, 15 Nov. 1497, Siena.

ernment by bringing armed crowds onto the streets and into the Campo, as had been done in the 1480s and as the Riformatori had tried to do in 1495. There was a report in April 1496 that the leading Noveschi had broached the suggestion to the principal members of the Monte del Popolo that it would be good to disarm the *popolo minuto*, and put their weapons in the houses of the more substantial citizens, and that the Popolari had refused to consider this.⁶ Nevertheless, the infantry guard was more than a bodyguard for Pandolfo and security for fearful Noveschi. When there was a threat of trouble from inside or outside Siena, one of the first responses of the Balìa was usually to vote an increase in the guard.⁷ It was a protection for the Balìa, for the regime, for the oligarchy as well.

Pandolfo also tried to cultivate good relations with other military commanders in the pay of Siena. He became 'very friendly' ('molto domestico') with Jacopo d'Appiano, *signore* of Piombino, when he was Siena's captain in the early 1490s,⁸ and he made efforts to establish personal links with the Milanese Antonio Maria da Sanseverino when he became captain of Siena's troops in 1497. As the Siennese found it difficult to sustain the cost of paying for such commanders, Pandolfo could not try to use them as long-term support for his position. For that purpose, he thought that infantry were of more use than men at arms, though he did like to have a few light horse at his call, and did not care whose pay they were in.⁹ At times when there was a prospect of a showdown with his rivals, Pandolfo would hire extra infantry on his own account, although he tried hard to have them paid for either by Lodovico Sforza or by the Florentines, on the grounds that if his hand was strengthened he would be able to push through policies or decisions they wanted the Siennese to adopt.¹⁰

⁶ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 46, c. 174: Antonio Squarcialupi to X di Balìa, 14 Apr. 1496, Castellina.

⁷ For example, on 3 June 1497, the Balìa decided that Pandolfo could take on 250 extra *provisionati* 'to guard the city': ASS, Balìa 41, f. 179v.

⁸ ASF, MAP 19, 164: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 25 Oct. 1492, Siena.

⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1265: Cesare Guasco to Lodovico Sforza, 31 May 1498, Siena; *ibid.*, b. 1266: C. Guasco to L. Sforza, 14 Jan. 1499, Siena.

¹⁰ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1265: C. Guasco to L. Sforza, 31 May 1498, Siena; ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 58, cc. 202-3: C. Guasco, 24 Aug. 1498, Siena; Christine Shaw, 'The French invasions and the establishment of the Petrucci signoria in Siena', in Stella Fletcher and Christine Shaw (eds), *The World of Savonarola: Italian Elites and Perceptions of Crisis* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 173-6.

Often he had a role in negotiating contracts for Sienese troops, men at arms and light horse as well as infantry, probably because of the financial aspects of these contracts as well as his personal interest in the loyalties of the men and the uses to which they might be put. Even before he was elected to the Balia in April 1495, Pandolfo was on the way to becoming the financial expert of Sienese government, that is to say, the expert in devising ways in which money could be procured. This was not because he had especially extensive trade or banking interests, although he was building up his personal wealth partly by developing business concerns.¹¹ So intent was he on the accumulation of wealth that some of those who dealt with him came to think that this was the real goal of his pursuit of political power. 'He is a merchant, looking to make a profit from every little thing, however paltry, and he has nothing else on his mind than building up great wealth by means of the state.'¹²

As a member of the Balia, he sat on most of the myriad of financial commissions, charged with finding great sums—as when he was one of three men in May 1497 who were to find money for a variety of expenses, including 4,000 florins to pay some of Siena's soldiers—or small, as when he and Agnolo Palmieri were elected to find 30 ducats in October 1496.¹³ If he was not included in an important financial commission when it was first appointed, often he was soon added to it. Was this owing to his contrivance or insistence, or merely the recognition of the contribution his skills could make? The answer to that question depends on how much choice he would have had about which commissions he sat on. Appointments to such commissions of members of the Balia deputed to deal with a particular matter were usually made by the member of the Balia acting as prior, or chairman, for the day. Pandolfo could have influenced his own appointment if the prior of that day was one of his political allies, or he could have had himself added to a commission from which he had initially been excluded by waiting for a day when an ally would be prior and then having the subject of his joining it put on the agenda. Consequently, it is likely that he was on so many financial

¹¹ Giuseppe Chironi, 'Politici e ingegneri. I Provveditori della Camera del Comune di Siena negli anni '90 del Quattrocento', *Ricerche storiche*, 23 (1993), pp. 375–95.

¹² 'col mezo del stato cumularse gran roba': ASF, X di Balia, Resp. 58, cc. 380–1: Antonio Guidotti, 31 Dec. 1498, Siena.

¹³ ASS, Balia 41, ff. 21v–22r, 165v–166r.

commissions, by and large, because he wanted to be. When the financial expedients adopted to raise money were so often loans, forced or voluntary, in anticipation of revenues to be raised from taxation or from sales of communal property, there was obviously great potential for regular membership of such commissions to provide opportunities both for personal enrichment and for the dispensation of favours and patronage.

Another source of patronage and influence that Pandolfo was able to turn to his own advantage was the practice of selling offices. He was one of six members of the *Balia* elected to sell offices, appointed on 18 May 1497, and on 30 October he was given authority by his colleagues to sell on his own any offices which had not yet been sold.¹⁴ When the Council of the People agreed to the appointment of another five-year *Balia* in November, it was declared that the new *Balia* could not 'grant, sell or give any office in any way under any pretext whatsoever'.¹⁵ This did not stop Pandolfo, for example, 'by virtue of his authority over the sale of offices', selling a potentially lucrative one to a colleague and ally on the *Balia*, Lorenzo Donati, in February 1498.¹⁶ Yet though the restrictions placed on the *Balia*'s disposal of offices were evaded or ignored, the *Balia* of the late 1490s seems to have been more restrained, or at least more aware of the need for the appearance of restraint, in this controversial matter than the *Balia* of the late 1480s had been. There was no real opportunity for Pandolfo to ensure that offices were held only by his friends and allies or those beholden to him. His power was not founded on that kind of networks of clientage.

Nevertheless, political friends and allies were very important to Pandolfo. Earlier in his career, he had been conspicuously eager to do favours—'no one could be more zealous or a greater partisan to his friends'.¹⁷ Even stronger than his zeal to help his friends, however, was his zeal to further his own interests, which was so unbridled that he was held responsible, by Alessandro Braccesi, for much of the odium that fell on the clique of five of which he was a member. He was astute and active, he had judgement and could speak well,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 169r–v, 244v.

¹⁵ ASS, Consiglio Generale 241, f. 33r; Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 273–4.

¹⁶ ASS, *Balia* 43, f. 67v.

¹⁷ 'nelle imprese non potrebbe essere più caldo né più partigiano dello amico': ASF, MAP 60, 72: Alessandro Braccesi to Lorenzo de' Medici, 13 Oct. 1491, Siena.

but if he saw some personal advantage in an affair, 'he is so bold, indeed rash and arrogant that he cares for no criticism [*'carico'*] or danger, and he knows no law or obligation of friendship, and is full of ambition and passion'.¹⁸ Pandolfo justifiably kept his reputation for greed, to the extent that it harmed his standing and his bargaining power. His pleas for financial support from Lodovico Sforza or the Florentines were discounted partly because of the perception that he was too fond of money. He should not be so demanding, a Florentine envoy, Antonio Guidotti, warned him, 'so that he should gain some credit' with the Florentines, and be regarded as a magnanimous man, guided by political interests and not by appetite.¹⁹

Pandolfo wanted money from Milan or Florence not just for troops, but for bribes and pensions to other members of the Sienese elite. He had been one of a number of Sienese receiving an annual pension of 200 ducats each from the Medici, which had been distributed by his brother Giacoppo.²⁰ Pandolfo wanted to use such pensions, even if paid by Milan or Florence, to bind men to himself. The Milanese and Florentine envoys were well aware of this, and Pandolfo openly acknowledged it. At least 3,000 ducats a year would be required, he explained in October 1498, so that he could give a pension to fifteen citizens whom he would bind to him by written undertakings. He needed to have five citizens from each of the three governing *monti* obliged to him, if he was to manage affairs as he wanted to do.²¹ On this occasion, the Florentines promised to pay the money he asked for, but failed to keep their promise. In December, Pandolfo protested that he had had to pay out over 500 ducats of his own money to those to whom he had promised pensions, so that they would not complain.²² Whether he continued to do this, despite receiving no money from Florence, is not known.

Pandolfo repeatedly emphasized the importance of securing the support of a small group, although the number he specified varied

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, MAP 19, 414: A. Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 18 Aug. 1493, Siena.

¹⁹ 'accio con V.S. acquisti credito et entri in oppinione da homo magnianimo et che vadi naturalmente et per lo interesse del stato proprio et non per il becho': ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 58, cc. 265–6: Antonio Guidotti, 22 Sept. 1498, Siena.

²⁰ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 247–8.

²¹ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 58, cc. 286, 292–3, 297: Antonio Guidotti, 8, 11, 13 Oct. 1498, Siena.

²² ASF, Signoria, Resp. 10, c. 330: Antonio Guidotti to X di Balìa, 25 Dec. 1498, Siena.

from eight to fifteen. What makes his insistent requests for subsidy from Florence in the autumn of 1498 particularly interesting is his explanation that he wanted men from each of the government monti. Pandolfo did not base his bid for power on the support of his own monte, the Nove. In fact, his most dangerous enemies came from within the Nove, while some of his closest allies, at least at this stage of his career, were Popolari like Lorenzo Donati and particularly Agnolo Palmieri. Pandolfo had been in touch with Agnolo Palmieri even before he had returned from exile in January 1495 and was elected to the Balìa with Pandolfo in April of that year. They frequently served on the same financial commissions, and often they two alone are recorded as making decisions or authorizing payments. Pandolfo's father-in-law, Niccolo Borghesi, who by the late 1490s had become Pandolfo's greatest enemy among the Nove, accused him of 'boasting that he has defended the *popolari*'.²³ But there was nothing of the demagogue about Pandolfo; the allies he sought were fellow oligarchs.

All too little is known of how Pandolfo built up his circle of supporters, or of how that circle might have changed over the years. An important document, a written agreement between Pandolfo and fifteen other men, provides some insight into the nature of his relations with them some years later, in 1507. It was a pact of mutual defence and support, which no one else could join except with the agreement of three-quarters of the signatories; it was to be binding on their sons and descendants as well. All important matters were to be discussed among them; the substance of these discussions was to be kept secret. Any quarrels among the signatories were to be settled by the decision of a two-thirds majority of the remaining members. Anyone breaking the terms of the pact would be treated as an enemy by the others; except that if Pandolfo broke its terms the pact would be considered dissolved. As 'no body can exist without a head', they agreed that Pandolfo should be their head; the others promised to preserve his position and dignity, and to share his fortunes; this promise would also apply to his sons. Of the fifteen men apart from Pandolfo who signed this pact, one, Lorenzo Donati, had joined the Balìa in March 1494, two others, Crescenzo Gori and Agnolo Palmieri, had joined with Pandolfo in April 1495, and most (but not

²³ Giuseppe Chironi, 'Nascita della signoria e resistenze oligarchiche a Siena: l'opposizione di Niccolo Borghesi a Pandolfo Petrucci (1498-1500)', *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: politica, economia, cultura, arte*, 3 vols (Pisa, 1996), III, p. 1191.

all) of the others had joined it in November 1497 or later.²⁴ Three (Donati, Gori and Palmieri) were Popolari, three (Gianbattista Saracini, Girolamo Tolomei and Ugo Ugurgieri) were Gentiluomini, there was one Dodicino (Jacomo Venturi) and one non-Sienese, the jurist Antonio da Venafro; the rest were Noveschi. When the pact was renewed in 1512 after the death of Pandolfo for the benefit of his sons Borghese and Alfonso, who was a cardinal, it was signed by thirteen men. Two were Gentiluomini (Ugurgieri and Saracini), two Popolari (Gori and Giovanni Palmieri, Agnolo's son), and the remainder, apart from Antonio da Venafro, were all Noveschi.²⁵ This increasing predominance of Noveschi among Pandolfo's closest supporters indicates that he may have become more reliant on the support of men from his own monte later in his career, but until more is known about his supporters in the later 1490s, this has to remain an open question.

Whatever the balance of the monti among his closest circle of supporters, Pandolfo never made the mistake of thinking he could take power on his own. It was obviously part of his long-term strategy, one he pursued consistently, to have a group of allies—of allies, not clients. This is central to the answer not only to the question of how Pandolfo achieved pre-eminence among the oligarchy of Siena, but also to the question why the other members of the oligarchy allowed him to do so. Greedy as he was, Pandolfo was ready to share the fruits of power—among a restricted group, perhaps, but still to share them. And he used his political skills not just to secure his personal position but to secure the position of the oligarchy.

There is a risk of seeing Pandolfo's position in the later 1490s out of perspective, if it is seen from the viewpoint of his being effectively the *signore* of Siena. Although he was recognized by the early sixteenth century as the most powerful individual in Siena, it should not be assumed that he was so even in the later 1490s (and certainly not

²⁴ Mino della Gazzaia was elected to the Balìa on 28 November 1510, and Alessandro di Galgano Bichi on 2 January 1511 (ASS, Balìa 56, ff. 63v, 83r). Ugo Ugurgieri was a member of the Balìa by July 1509 (ASS, Balìa 55, f. 45r), but I do not yet know when he was elected. I am indebted to Philippa Jackson for the information on these elections. It may be significant that this pact was drawn up a month before the mandate of the Balìa was due for renewal by the Council of the People (see Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 127–8, 289).

²⁵ Philippa Jackson, 'Le regole dell'oligarchia al tempo di Pandolfo Petrucci' in Mario Ascheri (ed.), *Siena e il suo territorio nel Rinascimento III* (Siena, 2000), pp. 212–3.

from the return of the exiles in 1487, as has sometimes been done). Such notions of Pandolfo's position have generally been formed without knowledge of some of the best sources of information on Siena in the 1490s, the reports first of the Medici agents and then of Milanese resident ambassadors and Florentine envoys sent to negotiate with the Sieneese in the later 1490s. Even these sources may give an exaggerated notion of Pandolfo's power. Only the Medici agents had a primary interest in the internal politics of Siena. Lodovico Sforza was essentially concerned with Sieneese relations with the Florentines; the Florentines from 1495 were principally interested in recovering Montepulciano (which had rebelled against Florence and submitted to Siena). Pandolfo was presenting himself as head of the Sieneese partisans of Milan, and then trying to convince the Florentines that he was the one best placed to deliver what they wanted from Siena. Arguably, it would be easy to over-estimate Pandolfo's pre-eminence in these years.²⁶

On the other hand, the fact that there were plots against him in the later 1490s indicates that he really had come to dominate Siena. In August 1497 ten men, Noveschi and Gentiluomini, were arrested and accused of conspiring against Pandolfo. From their confessions, the police chief, the bargello, appears to have been as much of a target as Pandolfo. He was to be killed, while the conspirators varied in their account of what was to happen to Pandolfo. One, Aldobrandino Cerretani, said he was to be killed; three others said they were to go to the Balìa and demand that Pandolfo 'should not govern any more, that is, he should not be greater than the others, but be equal with the other citizens.' Only if the Balìa refused that demand did they plan to assassinate Pandolfo, Bernardino Piccolomini said. This

²⁶ David Hicks's argument that Pandolfo benefited from the tutelage of Lodovico Sforza in the art of ruling, with advice relayed by the Milanese ambassador, and that Lodovico financially supported Pandolfo's dominance (to the tune of 20,000 ducats in 1496 alone), is not supported by the evidence in the correspondence between Siena and Milan in these years in ASMi, ASforzesco, bb. 1263–6. (David Hicks, 'The education of a prince: Lodovico il Moro and the rise of Pandolfo Petrucci', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 8 (1961), pp. 88–102; and *idem*, 'The Sieneese oligarchy', p. 1069, where he describes Pandolfo as continuing 'with unswerving loyalty' in the role of 'Milan's surrogate in Siena', until Lodovico was driven from Milan by the French in 1499). See Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci*, pp. 87–94, 112–20, for Pandolfo's financial dealings with Milan and Florence.

conspiracy does not seem to have got beyond the stage of discontented grumbling relieved by fantasies about what they would like to do. It is revealing that they planned to attack the bargello. None of those accused of involvement were politically significant figures: they were hotheads, a threat to public order rather than political stability.²⁷ They were given sentences of imprisonment and exile, and some were sentenced to corporal punishment, which was not usual (short of execution) for political offences in Siena. One man, Niccolo di Buonaventura Borghesi, was given by far the most severe sentence, three years in fetters in the bottom of the tower of the fortress at Massa, followed by indefinite exile there; he died after only a few months.²⁸ The Milanese envoy Cesare Guasco reported later that Pandolfo and his friends had been involved in contriving Niccolo di Buonaventura's arrest and imprisonment, because he was rash and impulsive and could have caused trouble.²⁹

Another impulsive enemy of Pandolfo among the Nove, and potentially a much more dangerous one, was Luzio Bellanti. Intelligent, with a reputation for learning (in medicine and philosophy), but also spirited, a man of action, with a popular following, he had been a rival of Pandolfo for years. He joined Pandolfo on the Nine of Ward in 1493, and became a permanent member, staying on after Pandolfo resigned in 1495. He competed with Pandolfo for control of the infantry guard, keeping the men together when they had been turned out of the city in June 1495 at the request of the French ambassador, and leading them back the next month; thereafter he seems to have shared their command with Pandolfo. By early 1493, he was known to be an enemy of Pandolfo;³⁰ by late 1495 he was ready to plot with the Florentines and Siennese exiles to bring Pandolfo down. The Florentines were ready to back him and to encourage his enmity towards Pandolfo, because at that time Pandolfo and Giacoppo were supporting Piero de' Medici's efforts to return home.³¹ In April 1496 a plot came to light, in which Luzio Bellanti and another Novesco, Pietro Borghesi, planned with some Riformatori to admit the exiles

²⁷ N. Mengozzi, 'Un processo politico in Siena sul finire del secolo XV', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 27 (1920), pp. 209–13.

²⁸ ASS, Balìa 41, ff. 215v–218v.

²⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1265: C. Guasco to Lodovico Sforza, 10 Feb. 1498, Siena.

³⁰ ASF, MAP 19, 55: A. Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 19 Feb. 1492(3), Siena.

³¹ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 44, 246: Braccio Martelli, 17 Dec. 1495, Poggibonsi.

and 500 Florentine infantry to Siena. Pandolfo was not their only target; several Popolari and other citizens were to be killed too.³² After Pietro Borghesi revealed this plot, Luzio Bellanti thought it advisable to go about with an armed escort when he ventured out of his house, but it was not until a second plot with the exiles came to light in September 1496 that he fled the city.³³ This time Pandolfo had written evidence against him, and Luzio was declared a rebel and a price put on his head.³⁴ His targets were said to have included the Milanese ambassador and Andrea Piccolomini, whose assassination, given the diplomatic status of the one and the great personal popularity in Siena of the other, would have shown very poor judgement on Luzio's part.³⁵ Pandolfo, on the other hand, had been very canny in dealing with Luzio, avoiding confrontation with Luzio's powerful friends (not least his devoted brother Leonardo), and leaving Luzio enough rope to hang himself.

This illustrates another of the bases of Pandolfo's success, his political intelligence. He was simply a more skilful political operator than any of his potential rivals; no one else in Siena could really match him. Luzio Bellanti, for all his intelligence and spirit, had made the mistake of allying himself with the Florentines, at a time when the Sienese were at war with them over Montepulciano; his fall provoked no popular sympathy. Leonardo Bellanti retained his position in the oligarchy after Luzio went into exile, although he was very close to his brother and, Luzio claimed, ready to support him should he return in force.³⁶ Leonardo was known to be an opponent of Pandolfo; and more open in opposition than others who shared his views. He was ready to think of using arms. In early 1498 Pandolfo was concerned by reports that he had armed men in his house,³⁷ and in 1508 he was involved in a plot by one of his sons to assassinate Pandolfo.³⁸ But he was not really tough enough to square up to Pandolfo. More than once in the early 1490s, Pandolfo and Giacoppo had been able to win him over when he disagreed with them; they

³² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1263: Giovanni Malavolta to Lodovico Sforza, 18–19 Apr. 1496, Siena.

³³ *Ibid.*: Antonio Stanga to Lodovico Sforza, 7 Sept. 1496, Siena.

³⁴ ASS, Balìa 41, ff. 8v–9r.

³⁵ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 51, c. 57: Bindaccio Ricasoli, 18 Sept. 1496, Brolio.

³⁶ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 55, cc. 310–1: Alessandro Braccesi, 5 May 1497, Rome.

³⁷ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1265: C. Guasco to Lodovico Sforza, 10 Feb. 1498, Siena.

³⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio*, Book III, Chapter VI.

had reckoned this was the best way to deal with him, although Giacoppo claimed then that they could turn Leonardo out of the government if they chose.³⁹ Pandolfo apparently felt in the later 1490s that it was better to have Leonardo where he could know what he was up to, rather than try to force him into exile with his brother.

Pandolfo's own brother, Giacoppo, might have resented the ascendancy of Pandolfo, who was nearly twenty years younger than he was. But Giacoppo apparently lost his place at the centre of government in 1495, his political standing perhaps fatally undermined by the exile of the Medici. He remained on the Balìa until his death in September 1497, but was given only one or two commissions, and those quite minor ones.⁴⁰ Another man who might have challenged Pandolfo, Francesco Severini, had died in March 1495; had he not died, the chances are that he would have gone the way of Luzzo Bellanti. The most effective rival to Pandolfo would have been Andrea Piccolomini—if he had cared to bid for power. He and his brothers retained great influence in Siena, with Andrea, who was most often resident in the city, the most popular of the three. But he had no ambition to become *signore*. One major reason for the popularity that was the foundation of his political influence was his moderation, his role as the leader and advocate of those *popolari* who wanted a quiet life. Andrea—and his brother Jacopo, when he was in Siena—were at the heart of the oligarchical regime, despite their championing the cause of a return to 'government by the councils' in 1493. Andrea sat on many of the commissions of the Balìa, dealing with the whole gamut of business. While Cardinal Francesco openly stated that he did not like Pandolfo's ways (and mistakenly predicted that he was heading for a fall),⁴¹ Andrea gave no sign of opposing him.

Another respected and influential figure, Antonio Bichi, could be numbered among Pandolfo's allies. He was described in May 1498 as being a 'man of not much less, indeed almost equal authority' as Pandolfo.⁴² This authority was not used to offset that of Pandolfo: he was evidently in his confidence. Antonio Bichi joined Pandolfo in asking the Florentines for money for pensions.⁴³ When a reform

³⁹ ASF, MAP 19, 585: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 10 June 1494, Siena.

⁴⁰ ASS, Balìa 41, ff. 61v, 117r.

⁴¹ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 56, cc. 180–1: A. Braccesi, 2 Sept 1497, Rome.

⁴² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1265: C. Guasco to Lodovico Sforza, 22 May 1498, Siena.

⁴³ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 58, cc. 292–3: Antonio Guidotti, 11 Oct. 1498, Siena.

of the *reggimento* was being elaborated in early 1498, the Balia took the precaution of electing the Concistoro for January and February: Antonio Bichi was selected to be Captain of the People, and it was said that this was Pandolfo's doing (Pandolfo himself was a gonfaloniere).⁴⁴ As in the early 1490s, it was Antonio Bichi's house rather than Pandolfo's that was used for the unofficial policy discussions of the inner circle of the regime: 'all the meetings and secret councils where Pandolfo is continually' were held there.⁴⁵

This was one of the many complaints about the regime and Pandolfo's role in it listed in a memorandum by his father-in-law, Niccolo di Bartolomeo Borghesi.⁴⁶ He it was who mounted the main challenge to Pandolfo in the late 1490s, until Pandolfo had him attacked in the street by a gang of assassins in July 1500; he died a day later.⁴⁷ This was a violent solution to the problems he posed for Pandolfo, but Pandolfo had consistently out-manoeuvred him for years. Niccolo had a high reputation among the Sienese for his learning and literary abilities, but he lacked Pandolfo's abilities as a political strategist and as a tactician. His intransigence in the face of calls for reform of the *reggimento* in the early 1490s caused problems for his political allies, who wanted to take a more emollient attitude. The root of his opposition was that the reforms threatened the income of 300 florins he derived from his position as secretary of the republic when the duties were in fact performed by the chancellor; he and his half-brother Leonardo Bellanti, it was remarked, had no other trade than their share in the government.⁴⁸

But Niccolo does not seem to have tried to build a network of political alliances, as Pandolfo did. He relied largely on the backing of his own extended family and of the Bellanti, and their friends and clients. The Borghesi and Bellanti were in fact behaving like magnate clans, with the younger members trying to impress their fellow citizens with their power by swaggering through the streets, ready to pick fights. The Borghesi family had 'plenty of men, especially young ones who readily wield weapons, and they carry weight because

⁴⁴ ASF, X di Balia, Resp 53, c. 46: Pietro Squarcialupi, 5 Jan. 1497(8), Castellina. For these reforms, see Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 107–12, 276–9.

⁴⁵ ASF, X di Balia, Resp. 57, cc. 16–17: Antonio Guidotti, 8 Jan. 1498(9), Siena.

⁴⁶ Chironi, 'Nascita della signoria', pp. 1188–93.

⁴⁷ Tizio, 'Historiarum senensium', VI, pp. 486–9.

⁴⁸ ASF, MAP 19, 580: A. Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 4 June 1494, Siena.

they are so numerous and are bound together by close family ties.⁴⁹ There were some clashes with members of the infantry guard, who also had a reputation for casual violence, and there were violent men among Pandolfo's clients—he did not have far to go to find the men who murdered Niccolo Borghesi. Nevertheless, the arrogant behaviour of the Borghesi and Bellanti meant that Pandolfo could propose using a drive for better public order as a means of containing them.⁵⁰ Usually, Pandolfo's preferred method of dealing with Niccolo Borghesi was to humour him, allowing him token victories when he tried to direct affairs, but finding ways to circumvent him. The ambiguity of Pandolfo's behaviour to Niccolo Borghesi caused one Milanese envoy to wonder whether he did not prop up Niccolo Borghesi's reputation in order to justify asking for support from Milan and Florence—'one moment he wants it to be understood that messer Niccolo has a lot of power, the next moment, that he has no power'.⁵¹

Niccolo has been seen as a defendant of republican ideals against the machinations of Pandolfo,⁵² but he was no advocate of popular government. What he really objected to was being upstaged by Pandolfo.⁵³ He toyed with the idea of organizing the assassination of Pandolfo, with the Borghesi, Bellanti and their friends (among whom he fondly hoped would be Andrea Piccolomini) coursing the streets to the cry of 'Long live liberty and the present *reggimento* and down with those occupying the property of the commune'.⁵⁴ There was no sign that he ever tried to put this scheme into operation. His list of complaints against Pandolfo—his manipulation of Siennese diplomacy, his corruption and financial malversation, the violence of some of his clients, the burdens placed on the territory of Siena⁵⁵—are shot through with a tone of baffled resentment. He could see clearly what Pandolfo was doing, and did not like it, but he could not find a way to stop him.

Many others shared Niccolo's unease at the way Siena was being

⁴⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1265: C. Guasco to Lodovico Sforza, 10 Feb. 1498, Siena.

⁵⁰ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 58, c. 343: Antonio Guidotti, 19 Nov. 1498, Siena.

⁵¹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1266: C. Guasco to L. Sforza, 11 Jan. 1499, Siena.

⁵² L. Zdekauer, *Lo Studio di Siena nel Rinascimento* (Milan, 1894; facsimile edn Bologna, 1977), pp. 12–13.

⁵³ Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci*, pp. 102–112, 118–9.

⁵⁴ 'Viva la libertà et presente reggimento et fuore chi occupa il bene comune'. (Chironi, 'Nascita della Signoria', pp. 1184–7).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1188–93; see Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci*, pp. 107–11.

governed, but it was the ways of the oligarchy that aroused discontent, not just those of Pandolfo. How far would those excluded from the centre of government, outside the magic circle of the Balia and their closest associates, be able to distinguish between Pandolfo's policies and actions and those of the Balia? There were still many who questioned the desirability of having long-term Balie, and who advocated a return to government by the Concistoro and the Council of the People. The granting of a new five-year mandate for the Balia at the end of 1497 was by no means a foregone conclusion. At several meetings of the Council of the People in November the proposal for the renewal of the Balia was rejected.⁵⁶ Because there were 'many citizens who did not want this form of government', a proposal that there should be no more Balie did pass, so that Pandolfo and those who wanted government by Balia thought they might have to use force. In the end, however, they got their way by 'cleverness and dexterity' rather than by threats and violence, and a new Balia with a five-year mandate was agreed, 'but only by just enough votes to reach the required two-thirds majority'.⁵⁷ Pandolfo certainly wanted a Balia. He was used to working within an oligarchical regime: that was what he knew, and the tradition of popular government would have meant little to him. He had little direct experience of that 'government by the councils' that to many Siennese seemed the right form of government for their state. Pandolfo had been in exile for most of his life, and before he returned to Siena in 1487 he had spent just over two years in Siena, from 1480 to 1482.⁵⁸ He had no thought of making a bid for supremacy by becoming a champion of the malcontents and of the advocates of popular government.

He and his fellow oligarchs were, however, ready to rejig the *reggimento* once again to try to make it more acceptable. The numbers in the Council of the People were reduced, and the numbers of the members of the three government monti were equalized by reducing the numbers of *riseduti* from the Monti del Popolo (435) and dei Gentiluomini (377) to match those of the Nove (368). Nine of the Balia were to hold a scrutiny to do this.⁵⁹ All the names of the

⁵⁶ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 1264: Giovanni Malavolta to L. Sforza, 15 Nov. 1497, Siena.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, C. Guasco to L. Sforza, 22 Nov. 1497, Siena; ASS, Consiglio Generale 241, f. 33r.

⁵⁸ Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci*, pp. 5–19.

⁵⁹ Several families of *Riformatori* were declared to be deposed from the *reggimento* entirely: most of the Buoninsegni and Gabrielli, all the Luti, Zondadori and Binducci.

riseduti left after this scrutiny were to be recorded in a register; only they, and those others who held office in the Concistoro in future would be members of the Council of the People. The descendants of those listed in the register after they reached twenty years of age (and subject to the approval of the Concistoro) were in future to constitute the General Council.⁶⁰ It took the Balìa several weeks to work out these provisions, and some ambiguities remained, notably as to what possibilities there would be for anyone not a riseduto included in the register or a descendant of such a riseduto to participate in the *reggimento*.⁶¹ But the aim of the reform was clear: to delineate a circumscribed hereditary group that would in effect constitute the *reggimento* of Siena, with the Council of the People being again an elite within that group, not coterminous with it. Only members of this hereditary group were to be eligible for scrutiny for office.⁶² Detailed provisions were drawn up for making up electoral purses for the various offices, to be evenly divided and regularly rotated among the three government monti, with an emphasis on ordering matters 'as used to be done in the past'.⁶³

Despite this attempt to invoke the forms and routines of the past, the spirit of the government was now very different. Sales of offices continued. The Balìa had no intention of allowing the Concistoro to exercise more of its traditional authority. They were able to evoke the turbulent conditions of the times to justify the need for a five-year Balìa. 'Considering the terms in which your city finds itself and that the discords there are in and outside Italy are of such a nature that they cannot be settled soon', there needed to be citizens appointed to see to the safety and quiet of Siena.⁶⁴ In fact, with the need to conduct a campaign to protect Montepulciano from the attempts of the Florentines to recover it, external circumstances were such as would have lead to the appointment of a Balìa, if not necessarily one with full powers, if there had not been one already.

Once a Balìa was elected, the tendency was for much business to be handled by a core group. These men might be the ambitious and the greedy, those who enjoyed the exercise of power, but could

⁶⁰ ASS, Balìa 43, ff. 9r–10r, 21v–22r, 25r–v, 39v–40r, 44v–45r; some of these provisions have been edited in Ascheri, 'Verso la definizione dell'oligarchia', pp. 356–62.

⁶¹ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 303–4.

⁶² ASS, Balìa 43, f. 44r–v.

⁶³ 'come antiquamente si faceva': *ibid.*, ff. 26v–30r.

⁶⁴ ASS, Consiglio Generale 241, f. 33r.

also be the conscientious, the ones concerned for the welfare of their city, the ones prepared to put in the hours, to stay in the city when epidemics struck or during the heat of the summer. When there was a series of five-year Balie, with very substantial continuity of membership—which meant in practice that, barring political disgrace, those sitting on the Balie could expect to stay there for life—this group could develop a coherence, a sense of being set apart from their fellow citizens, that might encourage them to ignore the restrictions the Council of the People tried to place on their activities. No member of the Balia could fail to recognize, for example, how attached the majority of the members of the *reggimento* were to the traditional system of the distribution of offices by sortition, but each time some restraint was placed on the disposal of offices by the Balia, they would soon be handing them out again. Sometimes they would try to find some justification for what they were doing, as when the legal expert (and crony of Pandolfo Petrucci) Antonio da Venafrò produced a ruling in December 1497 that, despite the unambiguous ban on the sale or grant of offices imposed on the Balia when it had been given a new five-year mandate less than a month before,⁶⁵ it did have the authority to dispose of offices that were not usually sold, such as positions on the Concistoro. This enabled the Balia to decide that it did have the power to select the Concistoro for January and February 1498, that would be in office while the Balia was working out the reform of the regime.⁶⁶ But this was being unusually scrupulous. The idea that the mandate for their authority derived from the Council of the People, does not seem to have been to the forefront of the minds of the oligarchs at the heart of the Balia. That they might be called to account for their actions by the other members of the *reggimento*, or by the *popolo*, was an annoying political constraint, not part of the constitutional framework within which they participated in the government of the city.

In the 1430s and 1440s the inner circle, the men who most frequently and regularly were elected to special commissions, including the Balie that met with the Concistoro,⁶⁷ were those who were looked to for counsel because they were respected by the other members of the popular government. They did not form a coherent group. As

⁶⁵ See above, p. 127.

⁶⁶ ASS, Balia 43, ff. 26v–27v.

⁶⁷ See above, pp. 9–10.

individuals, they had influence, not power. A striking proportion of the members of this inner circle had descendants or close relatives on the Balie of the late 1480s and 1490s. Of the 34 identified as members of the inner circle, at least 18 had close relatives on the Balie of the late fifteenth century, and two of the others had descendants who were subscribers to the 1507 pact with Pandolfo Petrucci.⁶⁸ Of the rest, nine were Riformatori—the 1490s was not a very propitious time for members of that monte to make a political career—and two of the remaining five had no known direct male descendants. This seems clear testimony to the influence of family tradition on political careers in fifteenth-century Siena, even before the oligarchy took a grip on the government.

The descendants of these men, and their colleagues in the Balie of the 1480s and 1490s, had rather different characteristics from those of their forefathers, however. Some of them at least had consciously striven for power and fought to maintain it, even against the wishes of their fellow citizens. To a great extent, the oligarchy of the late fifteenth century as embodied in the Balia was recruited by co-option. Each time the Council of the People was asked to vote to approve the appointment of a five-year Balia, the councillors were not allowed to choose the members themselves, but were presented with a list—one of the reasons why getting them to agree was not an easy task. It was the members of the Balia who chose replacements for their colleagues who died in office. Of the 68 men who were members of the Balie from July 1487 to the election of sixteen men in April 1495, 37 had had close relatives in previous Balie (including eleven of the sixteen elected by the Council of the People). Of the rest, fifteen were Gentiluomini or Dodicini, who had not had

⁶⁸ Of the members of Balie during the period 1487–95, Borghese Borghesi was the son, and Niccolo Borghesi the nephew, of Agostino Borghesi; Leonardo Bellanti the son of Battista Bellanti; Conte Capacci the son of Ser Cristofano di Andrea; Francesco Gabrielli the brother of Cristofano; Alberto Aringhieri the son of Francesco; Pandolfo and Giacoppo Petrucci the grandsons of Ghino Bellanti; Conte Luti the grandson of Antonio Petrucci; Antonio Bichi the son of Giovanni di Guccio; Massaino the son of Goro Massaini; Gionta Gionta the nephew of Guidoccio di Gionta; Giorgio Simoni the son of Jacomo di Ser Angelo di Guido; Bartolomeo the son of Landuccio Landucci; Ghino the son of Lorenzo di Ghino; Savino the son of Matteo Savini; Alessandro Pecci was the son of the first cousin of Pietro Pecci; Antonio the son of Pietro Turchi; Lodovico the son of Tome Docci; Alessandro the son of Tommaso Pecci. Among the members of the 1507 pact, Alessandro di Galgano Bichi was the great-grandson of Giovanni di Galgano Bichi; and Mino della Gazzaia the grandson of Bartolomeo di Tommaso della Gazzaia.

time to establish a family tradition of service on the Balia, and three were Piccolomini. Of the remaining thirteen, all but one had been a member of a previous Balia themselves.⁶⁹

Given the apparent emphasis on family tradition and previous experience in the choice of members of these Balie, the new members added in 1497–9, including those on the list of the Balia approved in November 1497, almost seem to be an infusion of new blood. A mere ten of the 22 men had close relatives who had served on previous Balie. Of the rest five had themselves served on Balie before, although in the case of two of them they had only served on one. Few had been politically prominent,⁷⁰ but then how was a man of the new generation to demonstrate his political skills or interests, when the kinds of special commissions on which the men of the inner circle of the 1430s and 1440s had shown their worth were all but monopolized by members of the Balia? Some had at least been able to show their worth to the regime. Fazio Benassai, Gianbattista Santi and Gianantonio Saracini had all been on several embassies; the Popolare banker Niccolo Sergardi had been involved with public finance; the Dodicino Girolamo di Gano di Manno had been a treasurer handling the payment of troops for three years and would therefore have worked closely with Pandolfo Petrucci.

As six of the men who joined the Balia in November 1497 were among those who signed the pact with Pandolfo in 1507, it is tempting to wonder whether he might not have had a hand in their election. None of those who signed the pact had joined the Balia before 1494.⁷¹ Six of them, including Pandolfo, were descendants of members of the inner circle of the 1430s and 1440s. But Pandolfo would have found it very difficult to become political boss of Siena working within the system of that earlier generation. In his conception of how the political system worked and how it should work, he was the heir to the conspirators of the 1450s, not to the proponents of popular government. The political system he was at home with was that of the cabal, like the fifteen men who signed the 1507 pact, the

⁶⁹ The exception, the Novesco Tommaso Calderetta, had been a leader of the exiles in Rome in the mid-1480s.

⁷⁰ An exception was the Popolare Fortino di Lorenzo di maestro Marco who had served on several Balie between 1480 and 1487.

⁷¹ One, Lorenzo Donati, had been elected in March 1494; three, Pandolfo himself, Agnolo Palmieri and Crescenzo Gori, had been elected on 14 April 1495; all the rest had joined the Balia later.

eight or twelve or fifteen men to whom he wanted to give pensions to bind them to him in 1498, the 'sixteen votes or more' in the *Balia* that Niccolo Borghesi complained he controlled.⁷²

Already by late 1498, Pandolfo was thinking in terms of establishing himself so firmly in power, eliminating his opponents, that he could pass on his power to his heirs.⁷³ He did found a dynasty of sorts, though not a very successful or long-lasting one,⁷⁴ but he himself never became the lord of Siena. Those around him were political allies, not courtiers. He did not have the private resources, and could not divert enough of the public resources his own way, to be able to make them courtiers. While he built himself a magnificent palace, it was only one of those being built in Siena at the time by members of the oligarchy.

Pandolfo emerged as political boss of Siena because of the political skills and energy he used to attain his goals and defeat his rivals, because none of those rivals could match his political skills, and because the proponents of popular government were not in a position to stop him. But above all, whatever dynastic dreams he cherished, because he was essentially a leader, a representative of the oligarchy and because, provided other members of that oligarchy were prepared to see him be top dog, he was ready to share power and the fruits of power with them.

⁷² Chironi, 'Nascita della Signoria', p. 1189.

⁷³ ASF, X di *Balia*, Resp. 58, cc. 251-3, 279-80: A. Guidotti, 15 Sept., 8 Oct. 1498, Siena.

⁷⁴ See below, pp. 286-7.

PART II

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

The example of Siena points to a number of lines of enquiry into the characteristics of popular government and of oligarchy in the towns of Renaissance Italy, how elements of both could coexist in the same regime and how and why one might yield to the other. Changes in institutions as well as changes in regimes were, of course, shaped by political events. During the last two decades of the fifteenth century, when the transition from broadly-based government to oligarchy verging on *signoria* took place, politics in Siena were peculiarly troubled, and it would be otiose to look for anything resembling the same pattern of events in other Italian towns in this period. Sienese political institutions and political society, and the changes and developments they underwent were, however, variations on themes which can be observed throughout Italy, and it is such common structures, ideas and practices, and the range of variations on them that can be found elsewhere, that are the subject of Part II of this book.

The first line of enquiry is into the characteristics of popular government. One that the Sienese themselves identified in the mid fifteenth century was that a popular government was one in which nobles could not participate without disrupting it. This was, of course, a tendentious argument, advanced to parry unwelcome demands from Pius II, and in practice, the Sienese *gentiluomini* showed that if they were admitted to the government, and were allowed to remain, they could fit in without causing any problems. What, if any, part did nobles have in other popular governments?

At the other end of the urban social spectrum, what part, if any, did the *popolo minuto* have in popular governments? The *popolo minuto* of Siena was generally excluded from participation, but this did not prevent them from taking an interest in how their city was governed. On occasion, they could show a greater sense of restraint and responsibility than some members of the *reggimento* did. There might even be a suggestion that they in some sense represented the *popolo*. Was this peculiar to Siena?

The defining institution of popular government in Siena was the Council of the People. In some ways, its members were a privileged political elite, but they formed a numerous one, which any member

of a monte could aspire to join, provided that they had the good opinion of their fellow citizens. The council was the source of authority in the government, delegating powers to executive commissions, and its approval was needed for all important decisions. Who were the members of legislative assemblies in other towns? How did those assemblies function? How would the legislative assemblies of oligarchical governments differ from those of popular regimes?

The defining institution of oligarchic government in Siena was the Balìa, an executive committee. As what was originally a temporary, extraordinary commission, appointed to deal with specific problems, became a *de facto* permanent body, whose members were appointed for long terms and expected to hold their seat for life, the balance of power in the government shifted from the Council of the People to the Balìa and the oligarchic group who used it to entrench themselves in power. Did other oligarchies centre on an executive committee?

By the end of the fifteenth century, Pandolfo Petrucci was well along the road to becoming *signore* of Siena, although this was a goal he and his heirs never quite reached. Again, the Balìa was his main institutional base—but dominance of the Balìa was only one of the foundations on which his position rested. His ambitions were resisted by other members of the oligarchy that had formed, as well as by advocates of Siena's tradition of government 'by the councils'. How might popular or oligarchical government become a *signoria* in this period? What resistance might be encountered by individuals seeking to become, or to act as though they were, *signori*?

Pandolfo's rise to power was accomplished through membership of a variety of oligarchic groups. One was the informal coterie of five men that tried to direct Siennese affairs in the early 1490s, before he joined the Balìa; another was the members of the Balìa who were entrenching themselves in office; and a third was the group with whom he made a written pact of mutual support. Some kinds of oligarchical groups in Siena were self-selecting, more or less conspiratorial; others were composed of men exercising greater influence because of the respect in which they were held by their fellow citizens, who elected them repeatedly to extraordinary commissions. What kinds of oligarchical groups came to prominence in other towns?

Although the traditions of popular government in Siena still had many defenders at the end of the fifteenth century, the entrenchment of the Balìa at the heart of the government, and the rise of Pandolfo Petrucci, would not have been possible unless many other Siennese

had come to hold different ideas about what kind of government they wanted in their city. Was the idea of popular government losing its attraction elsewhere too, and if so, why? Were those who supported and defended popular government defending traditional ideas, or had their understanding of it changed? Did participation in government signify participation in decision-making, or participation in office?

Those who favoured a more oligarchical government in Siena tended to look for support outside the city, as the conspirators of the 1450s looked to Naples and the cabal of five in the 1490s looked to Lorenzo and then Piero de' Medici. External insecurities and threats were often the reason for the appointment of temporary Balie, and the preferred justification for the prolongation of the long-term ones. Did external influences and pressures promote and favour oligarchical regimes? What was the attitude of the ultramontane powers to the surviving popular governments of Italy in the sixteenth century?

The answer to this question will bring us back to Siena, where popular government was revived in the 1520s, after the expulsion of the heirs of Pandolfo Petrucci. But it never recovered the equilibrium that broadly-based government had achieved for much of the fifteenth century there, and the divisions and conflicts that blighted political life in Siena from the 1520s to the 1550s provided the agents and officials of Charles V with opportunities to undermine the independence of the republic. The story of the end of the Siennese republic in 1555 was elaborated into a romantic, patriotic mythology, symbolizing the end of communal liberties in Italy. Did it signify the end of popular government in Italian towns?

CHAPTER SEVEN

POPULAR GOVERNMENT

Many Italian towns and cities, of all sizes and degrees of independence, had governments or important governing institutions that were still explicitly called 'popolare' in the fifteenth century and beyond. Siena was far from exceptional in having a Council of the People, although that council in Siena may have been unusually powerful. Siena was not the only city where the 'nobles' were still excluded from some offices, nor where the issue contested between nobles and *popolari* was whether the nobles should be admitted to full participation in government, not whether the *popolari* should be admitted or excluded. Nor was Siena the only place where the authority of the *popolo* could be invoked as the ultimate source of political legitimacy.

The essence of popular government in mediaeval and Renaissance Italy, its defining characteristic, has often been seen as the political representation of the trade guilds, the 'arts'. Only by combining together could the less wealthy members of the community hope to claim successfully some share of political power—and in what more natural way than through the associations that regulated their working lives? 'In Italian communes (with the exception of Venice)', according to Alison Brown, 'the *popolo* played an independent role in government as members of guilds.'¹ For Angelo Ventura, 'The only form of government capable of really allowing the *popolo* to exercise power, or at least to participate in it, was in fact that based on the corporations.'² Bandino Zenobi, who has studied the government of dozens of towns in the Papal States, in seeking to provide some broad classification of the range of civic governments found in the central and northern regions of Italy proposed as the classic model of popular government the 'governo popolare antimagnatizio', where nobles were excluded and participation in government reserved to

¹ Alison Brown, 'Changing perceptions of City and Citizen', in Alison Brown, *The Medici in Florence: The Exercise and Language of Power* (Florence and Perth, 1992), p. 292.

² Angelo Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società veneta del Quattrocento e Cinquecento* (2nd edn, Milan 1993), p. 110.

'the remainder of the adult inhabitants who enjoyed the status of citizens and were matriculated in the guilds'.³

If this basic premise is accepted, few civic governments in fifteenth-century Italy could be described as 'popolare', and even some of those that did technically qualify would seem anomalous. Bologna, for instance, where effective political power was divided between Giovanni Bentivoglio (who was sometimes regarded, and sometimes behaved, as though he were the *signore* of the city), the papal legate or his lieutenant, and the oligarchy embodied in the council of the Sixteen, was still nominally a 'government of the people and the guilds'.⁴ Florence under the Medici was a city in which membership of a guild was still a prerequisite for the tenure of political office. Nevertheless, in 1459 the official title of the members of the Signoria was changed from 'Priors of the guilds' to 'Priors of liberty', because of concern that the old title suggested that 'humble and abject and the lowliest people had insinuated themselves into presiding over the business of government'.⁵ In Perugia, the main permanent executive magistracy was composed of ten priors who were representatives of the guilds, and the major council of the elective heads of the forty-four guilds, who could be officially described as the 'chamberlains of the guilds who represent the *popolo*'.⁶ While the nobility had been excluded from membership of the guilds, from 1416 they were able to join them, and to hold offices based on membership of them. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Perugia was dominated by a dozen noble families, including the Baglioni, in a sometimes uneasy partnership with the papal governor. They made no attempt to change the statutory requirement to be a member of a guild in order to qualify for political office; they joined the guilds themselves, and not only the most prestigious ones.⁷ Consequently, when the Baglioni were discussing

³ Bandino Giacomo Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città": modelli politici nel governo delle periferie pontificie in età moderna* (Rome, 1994), p. 38.

⁴ 'governo del popolo e delle arti': Angela De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto. Bologna: una città europea nello Stato della Chiesa* (Bologna, 1995), p. 151.

⁵ Brown, 'Changing perceptions of City and Citizen', p. 298; Riccardo Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia nella Firenze quattrocentesca: rappresentanza esterna e identità cittadina nella crisi della tradizione comunale', in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Impruneta, 1987), p. 181.

⁶ G. degli Azzi, 'Il tumulto del 1488 in Perugia e la politica di Lorenzo il Magnifico', *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria*, 11 (1905), p. 438.

⁷ C.F. Black, 'The Baglioni as tyrants of Perugia, 1488-1540', *The English Historical Review*, 85 (1970), pp. 251, 254-5; Erminia Irace, *La nobiltà bifronte: identità e coscienza aristocratica a Perugia tra XVI e XVII secolo* (Milan, 1995), pp. 15-16.

with the other *gentiluomini* how the new electoral purses for offices should be made up in January 1492, there was a rush to enter the guilds.⁸ None of these were regimes in which guild membership secured for the *popolo* an effective voice in, let alone control of, a government formally representing the guilds.

On the other hand, it was not hard to find cities whose regimes were indisputably *popolare*, or in which the *popolo* had an important and secure share, but in which the participation of the *popolo* was not based on representation of the guilds. Siena was one, of course. Even in the days of the radical Popolare regime in the mid 1480s, the trade guilds had no political role there. In Genoa, half of all political offices went to *popolari*, and half of those were reserved for 'artefici', tradesmen (including notaries). The most important position, that of the Doge, could only be held by a *popolare*; his official title was Doge of the Genoese and Defender of the People ('populi defensor'). But the trade corporations never had any statutory role in political life, and, in one of the major trading cities of Italy, there was not even a merchants' guild.⁹

There were really no clear categories into which the forms of government of Italian towns and cities can be sorted. Each regime was different, each had its own peculiarities. Many, like Perugia, had surprising combinations of elements that might be thought incompatible. Perugia had a civic government structured on the representation of the guilds, but dominated by a noble oligarchy. In neighbouring Foligno, under the *signoria* of the Trinci family, the government had been explicitly defined by the statutes until 1439 as 'of the people and the guilds'.¹⁰ The concept of a 'governo popolare' is as protean, as hard to define succinctly, as the concept of the 'popolo' itself. Three main lines of enquiry suggested by the characteristics of popular government in Siena will be followed here, to try to establish a clearer idea of the nature of popular government in other Italian towns and cities: whether the nobles were excluded; what was the role of the *popolo minuto*; who sat in the main legislative and deliberative assembly and how did it function?

⁸ 'Cronaca di Pietro Angelo di Giovanni', ed. O. Scalvanti, *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria*, 9 (1903), p. 368.

⁹ Arturo Pacini, 'La tirannia delle fazioni e la repubblica dei ceti: vita politica e istituzioni a Genova tra Quattro e Cinquecento', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 18 (1992), p. 70.

¹⁰ Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*, pp. 140-2.

In Siena the nobles had been excluded from all major political offices. When Pius II pressed the Siennese to admit the *Monte dei Gentiluomini* to full participation in the regime, the Siennese resisted stubbornly, arguing the natural incompatibility of nobles and *popolari*. They finally yielded to Pius's insistence only gradually and grudgingly, and turned the *Gentiluomini* out of the regime within months of the pope's death. It was external pressure again, this time from Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, that in 1480 brought them back in, provoking subdued protest but no real resistance. While the *popolari* were intent on feuds amongst themselves, the *Gentiluomini* fitted into the *popolare* regime without difficulty. Some may have hankered after a more prominent role, such as they felt befitted their noble status, but they made no attempt to do anything to bring this about.

Nobles or 'magnates' in some other Italian towns and cities were still excluded from the government, or allowed only a restricted role. In Alessandria, they were not admitted to the executive council, the *Anziani*, who complained to the Duke of Milan in 1489 that the nobles openly mocked them, and spoke of them with contempt as worthless poltroons.¹¹ In some places legislation introduced centuries before to exclude 'magnate' families was still in force, or even being renewed. In Faenza, for example, the fifteenth century statutes issued by Gian Galeazzo Manfredi 'maintained a decidedly anti-magnate line', and the civic councils of Faenza were dominated by merchants and tradesmen.¹² Political discrimination against 'magnates' persisted at Foligno until 1439, when the new form of government set up by the papal legate, Cardinal Vitelleschi, with a General Council that included the nobles, ended the political disadvantages to which they had been subject.¹³

The best-known example of continued discrimination against magnates is Florence. There, 'magnate' was pre-eminently a political category. Those considered politically dangerous could be excluded from office by declaring them magnates, while cancellation of magnate status was a mark of favour, a means of political patronage. Men belonging to families categorized as magnates had been able to par-

¹¹ Letizia Arcangeli, 'Aggregazioni fazionarie e identità cittadina nello stato di Milano (fine XV-inizio XVI secolo)', in *eadem*, *"Gentiluomini di Lombardia". Ricerche sull' aristocrazia padana nel Rinascimento* (Milan, 2003), pp. 413–4.

¹² Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*, p. 87.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 141–2.

ticipate in government office by accepting transfer to *popolare* status. Some of the members of the magnate families retained well into the fifteenth century a measure of the social arrogance and propensity to violence that had marked out their ancestors for political proscription. This did not prevent an influential group of wealthy *popolari* in the early fifteenth century regarding the magnates as more natural companions in government than the minor guildsmen. The question of the status of the magnates, it has been argued, 'constituted the only major ideological issue' between the Medici party and the 'conservatives' led by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who had Cosimo de' Medici and some of his relatives and allies sent into exile in 1433.¹⁴ Some significant positions—though not in the major central magistracies—were opened up to magnates after the exile of the Medici. When Cosimo returned to Florence and his conservative opponents and their associates were exiled in their turn, a fifth of the exiles were or had been magnates. But there were no reprisals against the magnates as a group. As part of the new political settlement, most of the magnates were made *popolani*, and hence eligible for political offices, while some *popolani* who were associated with the exiles were punished by being relegated to magnate status. After this, the term 'magnate' really ceased to denote a distinct social group, and became a judicial category of the politically proscribed. The office set up to administer the anti-magnate laws of 1293 was abolished.¹⁵

Initially the former magnates were grateful to Cosimo for their admission to full political rights. In time they found, according to Francesco Guicciardini, that while they had lost access to the offices reserved for magnates, they were not being elected to those that were theoretically available to them.¹⁶ Guicciardini's father Piero, commenting on the scrutiny, the process of selection of the names to be placed in the new electoral purses, carried out in 1484, noted that the 'nobles', the 'men of family' had scant success. If one of them was elected to sit as a Prior in the Signoria, he would not advance any further.¹⁷

¹⁴ Dale Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426–1434*, p. 346. See Guidubaldo Guidi, *Il governo della Città-repubblica di Firenze del primo Quattrocento*, 3 vols (Florence, 1981), I, pp. 128–9, for the positions magnates could and could not hold under the statutes of 1415.

¹⁵ Kent, *The Rise of the Medici*, pp. 220, 296, 346–7.

¹⁶ Francesco Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine dal 1378 al 1509*, Chap. 1.

¹⁷ Nicolai Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence under the Medici (1434 to 1494)*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997), pp. 368–9.

Magnates excluded from political office did have some outlet for ambition in their eligibility to hold prestigious office in the wealthy Parte Guelfa, 'a safety valve for magnates otherwise denied access to government', described in 1459 as a comfortable refuge for 'men of noble birth accustomed to living off the fruits of their estates'.¹⁸ Although the financial and political power of the Parte Guelfa had declined since the fourteenth century, it could still wield sufficient political influence for the Medici to engage in repeated efforts first to abolish it and then, when that proved too difficult, to trim its powers and bring it under their control.¹⁹

Former magnates did much better under the 'popular government' of Florence after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494. Measures to allow the admission to the Great Council, that was the basis of the new regime, of men from families who had long been resident and paid taxes in Florence, but who did not have the requisite record of office-holding to qualify automatically for membership of the Council, encompassed them. Over a third of those admitted under these measures in early 1495 were from old magnate families, and half of those admitted under further legislation from 1497 to 1512. Magnates were also finally making their way into the political elite. From Roslyn Pesman Cooper's analysis of the political inner circle during the years of the popular government, one third of the newcomers were from magnate families.²⁰

In Florence, as in Siena, once the nobles—the magnates of Florence, the Gentiluomini of Siena—had been allowed into the *reggimento* on an equal footing, they integrated into an avowedly popular government without difficulty. Nobles participated in popular governments in a variety of ways. In Pisa under Florentine rule, juridically the nobles were classified as *popolani*, and under that classification were admitted to all the offices available to Pisans.²¹ The nobility of Turin, socially clearly distinct, enjoyed no juridical or fiscal privileges, and appeared to be in a minority in most of the councils, but 'they con-

¹⁸ Alison Brown, 'The Guelf Party in fifteenth-century Florence', in *eadem*, *The Medici in Florence: The Exercise and Language of Power* (Florence and Perth, 1992), pp. 116, 108.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–42.

²⁰ Roslyn Pesman Cooper, 'The Florentine ruling group under the "Governo Popolare", 1494–1512', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 7 (1985), pp. 77–9, 103.

²¹ Michele Luzzati, 'Famiglie nobili e famiglie mercantili a Pisa e in Toscana nel basso medioevo', *Rivista storica italiana*, 86 (1974), pp. 449–59.

stituted a formidable pressure group'.²² Under the new constitution Pius II imposed in Todi, which changed the government based on representation of the guilds, the nobility were given a fifth of the seats in the main governing councils.²³ By contrast, the magnates did not fit easily into the government of Foligno after they were admitted in 1439. Two decades of social and political tension ended in 1460 with Pius sanctioning the exclusion of the *popolari* from the General Council.²⁴ After the nobles had been admitted into the regime in Perugia in 1416, they worked within the structure of a popular government, without really being integrated into it. One Perugian chronicler distinguished between the popular government, 'el regimento del popolo' and the regime of the nobility, 'lo stato dei Gentilomene'.²⁵ The hybrid nature of the Perugian government was encapsulated in 1488 in an official document (recording the instructions for ambassadors to the pope) as 'the present ecclesiastical government of nobles and worthy *popolari*'.²⁶

By the later fifteenth century, the usual form of popular government was one with the nobility either integrated, or having a specific share of government office. A striking example of a formally popular government that was in fact shared by nobles and *popolari* was the regime in Genoa, which persisted unchanged despite the turbulence of Genoese political life. All offices were divided equally between nobles and *popolari*, except the highest office of all, that of Doge, which could not be held by a noble. After the constitutional settlement of 1413, the *Regulae*, which established this equal division of offices, for the rest of the fifteenth century nobles and *popolari* were content to share the government. It has been argued that disputes between nobles and *popolari*, centred on taxation, were the principal source of internal conflict in fifteenth-century Genoa.²⁷ Taxation was indeed

²² Alessandro Barbero, 'La vita e le strutture politiche nel quadro della bipolarità signore-comune', in *Storia di Torino 2: Il basso medioevo e la prima età moderna (1280-1536)*, ed. Rinaldo Comba (Turin, 1997), pp. 546-7.

²³ Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*, p. 150.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁵ 'Cronaca di Pietro Angelo di Giovanni', 9 (1903), pp. 34-5, 53.

²⁶ 'presentem ecclesiasticum statum nobilium et bonorum popularium': degli Azzi, 'Il tumulto del 1488 in Perugia', p. 437.

²⁷ Antonia Borlandi, '"Janua, janua Italie": uno sguardo al Quattrocento genovese', *Archivio storico italiano*, 143 (1985), pp. 15-38.

the primary cause of conflict between nobles and *popolari*,²⁸ but relations between them were not generally antagonistic. The fundamental causes of the recurrent political tensions that gave Genoa its reputation for instability were the ambitions and policies of the doges and of those who aspired to be doge.

Pietro Campofregoso, Doge from 1450 to 1458, was responsible for stirring up the most serious episode of dissension between nobles and *popolari* in the fifteenth century. In the early years of his rule, he had relied heavily on the support of one of the most important noble families, the Doria, but by late 1453 most of them were taking their distance from him. He turned to the *artefici*, the smaller tradesmen and artisans who had half the offices allocated to the *popolari* (the other half went to the merchants), telling them that the nobles wanted to surrender Genoa to the King of France. In May 1454 several thousand *artefici* took an oath to uphold him. Optimistic that the wealthier *popolari* would join the pact, and that he would be given increased authority to pursue the policies he chose, he said that he knew many nobles would not like this, but that was just too bad.²⁹ To consolidate his hold over the *popolo minuto* he pressed for tax reforms that would favour their interests, such as the abolition of the tax on the retail sale of wine, and a revision of the assessment of the main tax on property (which angered the richer *popolari* as well as the nobles).³⁰ It was declared in February 1455 that in future the nobles would have to pay seven-eighths of all future direct taxes, the *popolo* only one-eighth.³¹

In order to prevent the nobles evading this burden, the doge issued a proclamation that no one was to leave the city without his permission. He detained many of them, and some richer *popolari* as well, in the dogal palace, demanding security that they would pay all the taxes imposed on them for the next five years. The nobles, it was

²⁸ Disputes over taxation were principally over the method of assessment of the 'avaria', a direct tax: see Christine Shaw, 'Principles and practice in the civic government of fifteenth-century Genoa', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 58, no. 1 (2005), pp. 71–3.

²⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 409: Doge to Ser Leonardo da Pietrasanta, 7 May 1454, Genoa.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: Giovanni della Guardia to Francesco Sforza, 24 September 1454, Genoa.

³¹ For details of the tax reforms, see Antonia Borlandi, 'Ragione politica e ragione di famiglia nel dogato di Pietro Fregoso', in *La Storia dei Genovesi IV (Atti del Convegno di Studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova 28–30 aprile 1983)* (Genoa, 1984), pp. 358–60, 385–402.

reported, 'are bursting with rage'.³² Those who had left the city despite his proclamation so as to avoid paying taxes joined with his enemies who were already in exile. As the forces arrayed against the doge gathered strength, and his support among the *popolari* dropped away, in July 1455 he embarked his family on a galley and fled. The nobility could not agree on what to do, and within a couple of days Pietro Campofregoso was back and had recovered his position as doge.³³ Recognizing that he could not rule as he had before, he cancelled the securities he had forced the nobles to provide.³⁴ He sought reconciliation with some of them—the Doria, the Grimaldi (to whom he was related by marriage) and the Lomellini—saying he wanted to try to create goodwill between them and the *popolo*.³⁵ But he never succeeded in gaining the trust of the nobles and had lost much of his following among the *popolari*. After trying in vain to make a bargain with the Duke of Milan, he sold Genoa to the King of France, Charles VII, in 1458.

Many Genoese nobles had wished for the dominion of the King of France over Genoa, which lasted from 1458 to 1461, and the regime was thought to be favourable to them. So too was the later French regime, when Louis XII had dominion over Genoa from 1499 to 1512. By that period, the developing aristocratic culture in Italy, with urban political elites increasingly anxious to be regarded as noble,³⁶ may have influenced the Genoese nobility and encouraged them to claim superiority over the *popolari*. While some noble families—the Doria, Spinola, Fieschi and Grimaldi, known as the 'quattro gentes', the 'four lineages'—did have a special social status, there had been no marked social distinction in the fifteenth century between most nobles and the more prosperous *popolari*. If the nobles' outlook was changing, the *popolari* were not ready to change theirs, as was demonstrated by a revealing incident during Louis XII's ceremonial entry into Genoa in 1502. When the nobles claimed precedence, the *popolari* maintained that the more honourable positions should go to the eldest, as was customary in the magistracies of the city. To the

³² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 410: Giovanni della Guardia to Francesco Sforza, 8, 11 Mar. 1455, Genoa.

³³ There are several detailed accounts of this episode in ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 410.

³⁴ ASG, AS 3041: proclamation 2 Aug. 1455.

³⁵ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 410: Giovanni della Guardia to Francesco Sforza, 4 Aug. 1455, Genoa.

³⁶ See below, pp. 223–6.

nobles' reply that they should have precedence by right of their superior blood, the older *popolari* retorted that if blood was to be the criterion of rank and dignity, pigs should take precedence over other animals, because their blood was the tastiest. Although this was not an argument that would have met with the approval of the nobles in Louis's own entourage, the royal lieutenant, Ravenstein, ruled in favour of the *popolari*.³⁷

Nevertheless, the feeling that the nobles were receiving privileged treatment grew over the next few years. No *popolare* could get justice if he was involved in litigation against any noble (*gentiluomo*), an anonymous *popolare* diarist wrote. Arrogant, overbearing behaviour by individual nobles, ready to strike and insult any *popolare* who might argue with them, aroused great resentment.³⁸ What turned into a *popolare* revolt against the French in 1507, began in the summer of 1506 with the *popolo* organizing to demand some remedy to the provocative behaviour of the nobles. The nobles themselves blamed malgovernment by French officials for the trouble.³⁹ Under pressure from the *popolo*, and (according to the nobles) corrupted by bribes, in July 1506 the French governor, Rocquebertin, agreed to a change in the division of offices: henceforth the nobles, merchants and *artefici* were each to get a third.⁴⁰ Many nobles left Genoa, and envoys were sent to Louis to appeal to the king against 'the seditious plebs'. In refuting their arguments, the envoy sent by the *popolari* was instructed to retort that in Genoa 'those who are called gentlemen (*gentilhomini*) are no more noble than many of those who are called *popolari*'. All, in truth, should rather be called merchants. The distinction between nobles and *popolari* in Genoa was, it was claimed, derived from old factional divisions, like Guelfs and Ghibellines.⁴¹ Louis was not receptive to the arguments of the *popolari*. In the spring of 1507 he brought an army across the Alps and Genoa was surrendered to him without much resistance; he entered the city, this time as a con-

³⁷ Bartolomeo Senarega, *De rebus genuensibus commentaria*, ed. Emilio Pandiani, *RR. II.SS.*, XXIV, part 8 (Bologna, 1929–32), pp. 88–9.

³⁸ Emilio Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese (giugno 1506–1507) con diario e documenti inediti', *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, 37 (1905), p. 313.

³⁹ Léon-G. Péliissier (ed.), 'Documents pour l'histoire de l'établissement de la domination française à Gênes (1498–1500)', *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, 24 (1892), pp. 534–5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 537–8; Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 421.

⁴¹ Arturo Pacini, *I presupposti politici del "secolo dei genovesi": La riforma del 1528* (Genoa, 1990) (*Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, 104 (1990)), pp. 178–9.

queror, on 29 April. Soon all the available offices were handed out to the nobles and 'those who were their slaves', complained the anonymous *popolare* diarist.⁴² In fact, the new Anziani and other magistracies were once again divided equally between nobles and *popolari*.⁴³

Despite the incidents of violence against some nobles, and looting and destruction of some nobles' property, the events in Genoa in 1506–7 were not an episode of class warfare. As when the Nove left Siena in 1483, the departure of so many nobles from Genoa caused problems for small tradesmen and artisans. Proclamations were issued summoning all the nobles to return to the city with their households, and ordering them not to remove any property without the permission of the Tribuni della plebe.⁴⁴ There was no attempt to expel the nobility from government. These events of 1506–7, like those in Siena in the mid-1480s, do nonetheless provide an opportunity to observe the *popolo minuto*, the 'little men', the 'lower orders', taking an active political role. It was the *popolo minuto* and the 'artigiani' (artisans) who reacted against the arrogant behaviour of the nobles, and it was these groups who persisted longest in supporting the new regime. By the spring of 1507, many of the wealthier *popolari* were distancing themselves from the government and becoming more sympathetic to the nobles, even though in the new division of offices the merchants had increased their share of office from a quarter to a third, just as the *artefici* had done.⁴⁵

The *artefici* were no disorganized rabble. They could work through their trade guilds, the *arti*. In the 'Book of Peace and Concord' ('Libro di pace e concordia') which recorded the names of 1,641 *popolari* who took a political oath in late 1506, renouncing adhesion to the Adorno and Fregoso, Ghibelline and Guelf factions, the names

⁴² Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 411.

⁴³ ASG, AS 671, ff. 19v–20v.

⁴⁴ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 363. See below, p. 160 for the Tribuni della plebe.

⁴⁵ The best-known analysis in English of these events is still the article by Paul Coles, 'The crisis of Renaissance society, Genoa 1488–1507', *Past and Present*, 11 (1957), pp. 17–47. His analysis is flawed, however, by a misunderstanding of the usual pattern of Genoese government, as he wrote that the '*artefici* . . . or *popolo minuto*' were excluded from direct participation in politics (pp. 17–18), when in fact the *artefici* held a quarter of the seats in all offices and councils. He also implied (p. 20) that the division of offices in equal shares among nobles and *popolari* was introduced only in 1487, whereas in fact it had prevailed since 1413. See Pacini, *I presupposti politici del "secolo dei genovesi"*, pp. 24–7, 30, for a summary of the division of offices between nobles and *popolari* from 1290 to 1528.

of the members of the guilds were recorded grouped together under their *arti*.⁴⁶ Coordination between members of different guilds could be provided by 'companies'. The 'company of Jesus', for instance, was founded in January 1507. When public opinion was being sounded (a common practice in discussions about political policy in Genoa)⁴⁷ about whether the Genoese subject territories on the Riviere should be handed over to Louis to placate him, the members of the company of Jesus replied that they would debate the matter with the consuls of their guilds and reply through them.⁴⁸

Artefici, including *artigiani*, could also organize themselves, and act, quite independently of their guilds. An earlier decision in October 1506 that the Riviere should be put under the control of the French governor, had provoked strong resistance among a 'great multitude of *artigiani*' who assembled at the government Palace the next day, with cries of 'viva populo'. Fearing trouble, the officials revoked the decree. The following morning, over 2,000 *artigiani* met in the cloister of Santa Maria di Castello. After much debate, they decided on the election of eight *artigiani*, two each from the suburbs of Santo Stefano and San Tommaso, and four from the city, to be called 'tribuni della plebe'. Every day they were to go to the Palace to meet the officials there and hear what that day's business had been, and to make sure that anything important was made generally known.⁴⁹ This was only one of a number of such large gatherings of artisans, sometimes described as assemblies of 'heads of households' ('capi di casa'). They would gather not only to express their disapproval of what had been decided in the Palace, but also to debate matters of public concern and to take part in forming policy. They were participating in government to a much greater extent than usual, and in a manner that was out of the ordinary, and some men at the meetings would probably not normally be among those chosen for office, but they were not seeking to take over the government. Officials were elected and appointed in accordance with the 'law of two-thirds', assigning one-third to the nobles and two-thirds to *popolari*. If

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 150–2, 184–5. Pacini notes that not all the guilds were included (p. 185, n. 75).

⁴⁷ Christine Shaw, 'Counsel and consent in fifteenth-century Genoa', *The English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), pp. 856–7.

⁴⁸ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 369. For other companies, see Pacini, 'La tirannia delle fazioni', p. 101.

⁴⁹ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', pp. 340–1.

the nobles elected to office chose not to attend, that was their affair.

After both the French lieutenant Ravenstein and the governor Rocquebertin had left the city, the Genoese *popolari* had to face the fact that, if they were not to submit to Louis's demands, they would have to revolt openly against him. An artisan, Paolo da Novi, was elected Doge. This took place at a council of a 'great multitude of citizens' meeting at the Palace on 10 April 1507.⁵⁰ Such assemblies were the usual means by which doges were elected and were, naturally, ratifying a choice that had been made elsewhere.⁵¹ The official account recorded that the meeting of the main magistracies and other citizens that elected Paolo da Novi Doge followed an assembly of four thousand *popolari* in the great hall of the Palace that morning, and his acclamation 'by the whole *popolo* in the *piazze* and streets of the city'.⁵² According to the anonymous diarist, he was declared Doge 'by some individuals', before he paraded through the city 'with a great following of the *popolo minuto*'.⁵³ Paolo had been one of the most prominent of the artisans since the summer of 1506; among the offices to which he had been elected was that of a 'tribune della plebe'.⁵⁴ He was illiterate—when he took the oath renouncing factions, a notary had to sign for him because he could not write.⁵⁵ At his execution after Louis had recovered control of the city, he went to his death calling on the *popolo minuto* to stay united (and on good terms with the king), but not to trust the nobles or the rich *popolari*, the *popolo grasso*. Yet he appears to have been a respected tradesman, not a populist firebrand.

Nor does he seem to have been the front man for wealthier *popolari* trying to manipulate the situation for their own ends, although the circumstances of his election suggest he was working with, if not for, some kind of cabal. There had indeed been an attempt at manipulation of at least one of the councils in early September 1506, but it had met with scant success. Pietro Battista Giustiniani, a member of the largest and most prominent *popolare* clan⁵⁶ (and suspected of

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

⁵¹ Shaw, 'Counsel and consent in fifteenth-century Genoa', p. 851.

⁵² ASG, AS 668, f. 15v.

⁵³ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 388.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁵⁵ Pacini, *I presupposti politici del "secolo dei genovesi"*, p. 185.

⁵⁶ It was a coalition of several families who had taken the name Giustiniani.

being one of those who had won the support of the French governor by bribes) tried with others to push through acceptance of a demand by the governor that the Genoese should take their oath of loyalty to the king again. Rising to their feet, they said that this was a good idea and that they wanted to go to take the oath presently. They were told to sit down, and let those who wished to speak do so.⁵⁷ There would be plenty of *artefici* with experience of participating in the governing councils, and a knowledge of how proper debate should be conducted. They did not need to look to their social superiors for a political lead.

When Pietro Campofregoso made his pact with the *artefici* in May 1454, he was interested in their support in the streets rather than in the councils. The pledge they gave to him was that they would be ready to rally to his support, weapons in hand, whenever he should call upon them, so as to keep him in power. In return, he promised to defend them against insult or injury, and to maintain them in their quarter share of offices. Copies of the agreement were to be given to each guild.⁵⁸ Six thousand 'citadini artesi' had sworn the oath on a crucifix at his villa, the doge claimed, to aid him against anyone, for right or wrong.⁵⁹ He also sought to win the support of the *popolari* on the Riviera. When Genoese nobles tried to take over Savona, Pietro sent three *popolari* there to urge the artisans of Savona to stay loyal to the government and *popolo* of Genoa. He then sent his brother Tommasino, who with the help of what one noble condemned as 'a conspiracy of workmen' ('una coniuratione di mecanici'), forced the nobles to take refuge in the fortresses there.⁶⁰ Pietro also backed a 'union' of *popolari* in Albenga, sending letters patent to confirm his approval of this organization, which had clashed with Benedetto Doria, the captain of the Western Riviera.⁶¹ The 'union' included the *popolo minuto* ('plebe') as well as the artisans; the nobles of Albenga were refusing to join it.⁶²

⁵⁷ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 328.

⁵⁸ The text of this agreement is printed in *ibid.*, pp. 554–6; and in Borlandi, 'Ragione politica e ragione di famiglia nel dogato di Pietro Fregoso', pp. 378–81.

⁵⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 409: Pietro Campofregoso to Leonardo da Pietrasanta, 9 May 1454, Genoa.

⁶⁰ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 410: Giovanni del Carretto to Francesco Sforza, 4 July 1455, Finale; Giovanni della Guardia to Francesco Sforza, 4 July 1455, Genoa.

⁶¹ ASG, AS 1791, f. 667v, no. 2383: Pietro Campofregoso to Captains of the Union of the city of Albenga, 26 Apr. 1455.

⁶² A. Calenda di Taviani, *Patrizi e popolari del medio evo nella Liguria occidentale*, 2 vols (Bologna, 1979; reprint of edition of 1891–2), II, pp. 50–1.

Other doges, too, were ready to appeal to the support of the *artefici*, and to emphasize their role as 'defender of the *popolo*'. As in the case of Pietro Campofregoso, this was generally when they were concerned about lack of support from the nobles and the wealthier *popolari*, although no other doge made such an explicit pact with them as he had done. The *artefici* carried considerable weight during the contests over the dogeship that took place between the overthrow of the French government of the city in March 1461 and the acceptance of the rule of the Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, in 1464. It was not just the forces they could muster that made them significant players, but also a kind of moral authority with which they were invested at times.

It was a rising by *artefici* against the burden of taxes that precipitated the French loss of dominion over Genoa in 1461, by prompting the governor to take refuge in the main city fortress, the Castelletto, on 10 March. This unexpected retreat left something of a power vacuum, and several contenders for the dogeship hastened to stake their claim. A council of *artefici* assembled, and elected eight of their number as captains, who were given authority over the government of the city.⁶³ Such an election of "captains" at moments of crisis was not unusual—what was unusual was that they were all *artefici*. They stayed in office only for a day, leaving the Palace and, according to the official account, 'leaving the republic without a governor' ('republicam sine ullo rectore reliquissent'), but also leaving the way clear for the election of Prospero Adorno as doge by a council of over 500 citizens 'of every status and faction'.⁶⁴ Support of men willing to bear arms was very important to the new doge, for there was still a French garrison in the Castelletto and the threat of attack by French reinforcements to contend with. The *artefici* and *popolo minuto* were enthusiastic in the defence of their city, and they made up a large part of the force that decisively defeated the French troops advancing on Genoa in July. Support from Prospero Adorno's factional rivals, the Fregosi, had also been important, but when he tried to deny them entry to the city after the battle, they came in despite him, and Adorno was forced to leave. Over the next few years, three Campofregosi disputed over which of them should be doge, until the

⁶³ Agostino Giustiniani, *Annali della repubblica di Genova*, ed. G.P. Spotorno, 2 vols (Genova, 1854), II, pp. 420–1.

⁶⁴ ASG, AS 571, f. 25v.

Genoese, from the nobles to the *popolo minuto*, were more than ready to see the back of them all.

At one point in May 1462 the *artefici* were called upon to arbitrate between the two main contenders, Lodovico Campofregoso and Paolo Campofregoso, the Archbishop of Genoa, neither of whom could take a secure grasp on the office of doge, but neither of whom was prepared to see the other take the prize. A proposal that four 'notabiles artefices' should be elected to see if they could succeed in making an agreement was put forward and approved at a council of over 500 citizens on 28 May. Three days later, four *artefici* were elected to be Captains of the People of Genoa by the Anziani and a commission of eight men who had themselves previously been elected to try to make peace between Paolo and Lodovico Campofregoso and had been unable to do so. The four Captains of the People were summoned to swear an oath on the gospels to do all they could for the peace and preservation of the city.⁶⁵ They were given 'as much authority as is usually given to doges', noted one of the government chancellors.⁶⁶ So insecure had the city become, according to Lodovico Campofregoso, that 'all good citizens, *popolari* as well as nobles', and 'many of the artisans who had some means of supporting themselves', were leaving the city. The Captains were considering leaving the Palace to base themselves at the church of San Siro, so that they could exercise their office more freely and 'summon who they thought fit to help them put the city to rights'.⁶⁷ On 3 June a large assembly of *artefici* met at San Domenico (perhaps summoned by the Captains) and elected twelve of their number⁶⁸ to negotiate with the Campofregoso, decide who was in the wrong, and give their support to who was in the right.⁶⁹ Within three days, the twelve had brought Lodovico and Paolo Campofregoso publicly to accept, albeit reluctantly, the terms that they had negotiated, and to exchange a kiss of peace and take an oath 'in the hands of those twelve', before a 'great multitude of the *popolo*', to observe them.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ ASG, AS 573, ff. 59v–62r.

⁶⁶ ASG, AS 574, f. 28r.

⁶⁷ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 415: Lodovico Campofregoso to Francesco Sforza, 3 June 1462.

⁶⁸ Described by Spinetta Campofregoso as 'twelve friends of our house elected by 2,000 friends' (*ibid.*, Spinetta Campofregoso to F. Sforza, 7 June 1462, Genoa).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Cristoforo Panigarola and Biagio de' Gradi to F. Sforza, 4 June 1462, Genoa.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, C. Panigarola and B. de' Gradi to F. Sforza, 7 June 1462, Genoa.

On the following day, Lodovico Campofregoso was re-elected Doge, and the authority of the four Captains, if they were still exercising it, would have ceased.

Neither Lodovico nor Paolo was sincere when they said they wanted to observe this agreement, and the problems continued. Lodovico refused to leave the Castelletto to take up residence in the Palace, claiming he felt unsafe. There were reports that he was negotiating with those nobles who hankered after a return of the French. He denied this, but the *artefici* decided to put an end to the uncertainty by offering him money to hand the Castelletto over to them. Many of the nobles and the wealthier *popolari* were said to support this project. The *artefici* wanted Francesco Sforza's approval for the scheme as well, and that he should prepare to send a strict podestà to bring some order back to Genoa.⁷¹ On 2 September, Lodovico Campofregoso presided over an assembly of about a thousand *artefici* in San Siro, who urged him to come to terms.⁷² Lodovico and Paolo first tried to manipulate the *artefici*, each trying to provoke them against his rival, but then decided that it would be better to make an agreement between themselves. A council of *artefici* waiting at San Siro on 6 September for a reply from Lodovico was dispersed by Paolo and troops from the Castelletto. Some artisans in the streets cried 'Viva popolo' and began to arm themselves, but there was no fighting. Formally renouncing his adherence to the terms that had been negotiated by the twelve, Paolo Campofregoso declared that he would rather be at the discretion of his own family than that of the *artefici*.⁷³ When the Milanese envoys tried to revive the negotiations with the *artefici*, Lodovico claimed to regret not going through with them, but Paolo said he wanted nothing to do with it.⁷⁴ After Paolo deposed the irresolute Lodovico and became doge in his stead in January 1463, there was little prospect of the intemperate archbishop looking to the *artefici* for support.

Surely it was their regular participation in government that gave the *artefici* of Genoa the confidence and the authority to play a role as mediators and peacemakers, to organize orderly assemblies of several

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, B. de' Gradi to F. Sforza, 25 Aug. 1462, Genoa.

⁷² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 416: C. Panigarola and B. de' Gradi to F. Sforza, 3 Sept. 1462, Genoa.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, B. de' Gradi to F. Sforza, 6 Sept. 1462, Genoa; Agostino de Benegassio to Spinetta Campofregoso, 6 Sept. 1462, Genoa.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, C. Panigarola and B. de' Gradi to F. Sforza, 22 Sept. 1462, Genoa.

hundred, even thousands of men, to discuss policy and take decisions, to take the initiative in trying to find solutions to problems in the government of their city. Even during the radical Popolare government of the 1480s, the *popolo minuto* of Siena had not enjoyed the same degree of influence. They could take a part in shaping events, showing a sense of responsibility in their interventions, and they could act through the militia 'companies'. But they were not used to having a regular role in government, or a share in offices, and they seem to have been more readily susceptible to manipulation than the *artefici* of Genoa were.

In Florence 'the principle that sovereignty resided in the whole body of the citizens, and that consequently the Parlamento, the assembly of all the citizens, represented the highest form of sovereign authority', persisted to the end of the republic.⁷⁵ Substantial institutional changes and innovations had to be authorized by a Parlamento. This meant that a popular assembly, summoned by the bell of the Palace of the Signoria, meeting in the square before the palace to approve proposals by acclamation, constituted the supreme authority in the city. In theory, only men who were over thirty years of age and members of guilds could take part. In practice, the choice of who was allowed onto the square was at the discretion of the guards posted at the entrances to it, and under their watchful eyes, the acceptance of whatever proposal was put to the assembly was not in doubt.⁷⁶ Participation in a Parlamento would be as close to participation in the shaping of political policy as many of the lesser guildsmen would get in fifteenth-century Florence. There was no political role for the *popolo minuto*, even if they were enrolled in the craft guilds or registered in the militia company of their district of the city.⁷⁷ For all the theoretical sovereignty of the whole body of citizens, derogatory remarks about the unfitness of artisans and small tradesmen to share political power are not hard to find in the Florentine literature of political comment. 'These upstarts should stick to their petty trades to get what is needed to feed their families, and

⁷⁵ Carlo Varotti, *Gloria e ambizione politica nel Rinascimento: da Petrarca a Machiavelli* (Milan, 1998), p. 15.

⁷⁶ Guidi, *Il governo della Città-repubblica di Firenze*, I, pp. 91–3; Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, p. 78.

⁷⁷ Gene Brucker, 'The Florentine *popolo minuto* and its political role, 1340–1450', in Lauro Martines (ed.), *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities 1200–1500* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 170.

be completely excluded from the government of the Republic, as sowers of scandal and discord', the historian Giovanni Cavalcanti wrote in a speech he attributed to Rinaldo degli Albizzi.⁷⁸ Memories of the period of the Ciompi revolt of 1378, when the *popolo minuto* had upset what most members of the Florentine political elite regarded as the natural order of things, probably underlay many of such comments. The events of 1378 should 'stand as a lesson for all time to the distinguished men of the city, never to let political initiative or arms into the hands of the multitude, for once they have had a bite, they cannot be restrained and they think they can do as they please because there are so many of them', warned Leonardo Bruni, the Florentine chancellor.⁷⁹

Despite their use of the Parlamento to force through institutional innovations,⁸⁰ the Medici were not accused of trying to bring the *popolo minuto* into politics. Some opponents did accuse them of favouring 'new men', but these complaints were about individuals who were not part of the established Florentine political elite. After the expulsion of the Medici from Florence in November 1494, the question of the role of *artefici* in government was one of the issues raised in the discussions about constitutional reform. Friar Girolamo Savonarola, whose opinions were of great weight in this debate, said he hoped that *artefici* would be given some share in the regime.⁸¹ It was decided that all men who had resided in Florence, and paid taxes there, for at least thirty years should be eligible to hold offices, and minor offices were to be filled by lot. Consequently, even those who would not qualify for life membership of the Great Council that was the basis of the new constitution could hope to hold an office one day,

⁷⁸ Giovanni Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, ed. Guido di Pino (Milan, 1944), p. 53.

⁷⁹ Leonardo Bruni, *Historiarum florentini populi libri XII*, ed. E. Santini, *RR.II.SS.*, 19, part III (Città di Castello, 1914–26), p. 224, quoted and translated by John M. Najemy, 'Civic humanism and Florentine politics', in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 85. For a discussion of the debate among Florentine historians concerning the role of the *popolo minuto* and their relations with the political elite, as individuals and collectively, see F.W. Kent, '“Be rather loved than feared”'. Class relations in Quattrocento Florence', in William J. Connell (ed.), *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002), pp. 13–50.

⁸⁰ Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, pp. 80, 113–9, 187. The last Parlamento held in Florence was that in 1530, acclaiming Alessandro de' Medici: Marino Berengo, *L'Europa delle Città. Il volto della società urbana europea tra Medioevo ed Età moderna* (Turin, 1999), p. 180.

⁸¹ Varotti, *Gloria e ambizione politica*, p. 326.

including many *artefici*.⁸² The criteria finally agreed for membership of the Great Council—qualification in the past for one of the three major offices, or having a direct male ancestor in the previous three generations who had qualified for them—were not designed to include a broad mix of social groups. There was some surprise at the number of men, 3,500, who met these criteria. This was ‘the largest and most open regime that Florence had hitherto experienced’.⁸³ Some argued, disapprovingly, that plebeians had become members of the Great Council; others disagreed.⁸⁴

The problem for contemporaries debating such matters, and for historians trying to analyse the role of the *popolo minuto* in government, was and is the lack of a clear, agreed distinction between the *plebe*, the *popolo minuto*, and the *artefici* or *artigiani*. One man’s respectable artisan, worthy of a place in the wider political community, was another man’s vile plebeian, who had no business becoming mixed up in the affairs of his betters. For Matteo Palmieri, it was ‘absurd’ that a shoemaker should give an opinion on weighty matters of state, for he could not possibly advise on matters about which he could know nothing.⁸⁵ Machiavelli argued that those who exercised ‘mechanical trades’ would not know how to command if they held office, because their only experience was in taking orders, not giving them.⁸⁶ Others believed that, if the shoemaker was a tax-paying, long-term resident, he had a right to be considered a member of the governing *popolo*. Many of those in the despised ‘mechanical trades’—those who worked with their hands—would be relatively prosperous men, employing others, perhaps owning a little property in the country. Members of the *popolo minuto* brought into the Council of the People in Siena in 1482 were just such men,⁸⁷ not penniless, rootless day labourers.

Penniless labourers, journeymen, struggling artisans and small tradesmen would not in any case have had the time available to

⁸² Sergio Bertelli, “‘Uno magistrato per a tempo lungho o uno dogie’”, *Studi di storia medievale e moderna per Ernesto Sestan*, 2 vols, II *Età Moderna* (Florence, 1980), p. 452.

⁸³ Pesman Cooper, ‘The Florentine ruling group under the “Governo popolare”’, p. 72.

⁸⁴ H.C. Butters, *Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence 1502–1519* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 7–8.

⁸⁵ Matteo Palmieri, *Della vita civile*, ed. G. Belloni (Florence, 1982), p. 68.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Brown, ‘Changing perceptions of City and Citizen’, p. 300.

⁸⁷ Isaacs, ‘Cardinali e “Spalagrembi”’, pp. 1038–9.

participate in the political life of their community on a regular basis. How could such men spend two months or more attending daily meetings, perhaps even living in the government palace, had they been elected to serve on the main executive committee of their city?⁸⁸ How could they down tools whenever the bell rang to summon the deliberative and legislative councils? But even if the characteristic political arena of these social groups was the street rather than the council hall, that did not mean that when they gathered in the street, perhaps brandishing weapons, they were only there to fight for their immediate economic interests, or because they were being manipulated by their social betters. In Savona, for example, after the Genoese rebellion against Milanese rule in 1477, the *artigiani* and *popolo minuto*, after holding several meetings, decided that they wanted to defend Milanese rule of their city 'saying they could not have a better or more peaceful communal government'.⁸⁹ Taking an oath to defend this regime, they took up their weapons and set a guard on the palaces of the Anziani and the Podestà, and beat off an attempt by Fregosi partisans to take one of the fortresses in the city. Misbehaviour by the Milanese troops eroded their loyalty, however. When a few Genoese troops approached the city in August 1478, and the leading citizens of Savona were debating what to do, the *popolo minuto* made up their minds for them and brought the Genoese into the city, handing over the palace of the Anziani to them to cries of 'Viva popolo'.⁹⁰ The Sienese companies who helped to keep the peace when some Noveschi were trying to introduce soldiers into the city in 1482, were protecting a form of government in which they had little, if any, chance of participating. Such activity cannot automatically be discounted as men following their masters, being hired or duped by wealthier *popolari* or nobles, or joining in agitation that promised some excitement, perhaps an opportunity for plunder. Even if they did not have much personal stake in their city, this did not mean they could not identify with it, or have independent opinions about what would be to the public benefit.

⁸⁸ Genoa was one city where the members of that committee, the Anziani, did not have to reside in the palace during their four-month term of office.

⁸⁹ Riccardo Musso, "'Viva el Duca et lo Sancto Padre". Savona al tempo degli Sforza e di Sisto IV (1464–1478)', *Atti e memorie della Società savonese di storia patria*, n.s. 37 (2001), p. 123.

⁹⁰ They also cried 'Viva Santo Padre'; the pope, Sixtus IV, was from Savona: *ibid.*, pp. 129, 131.

A sense of identity with the community would help to explain the patriotism that the *popolo minuto* could display, and not just when they would be defending their homes and families. The fierce disapproval among the Sienese *popolo* of the return of the towns taken from Florence during the Pazzi War, the determination of the Genoese *popolo minuto* to gain and then to keep control of the Riviera in 1506–7 were examples of this. While the *popolo minuto* of Lucca was more passive politically, they could be roused to patriotism, particularly if there was some dispute with the traditional enemy of Lucca, Florence.⁹¹ Such patriotic sentiments among the *popolo minuto* were a factor that governments formulating external policy could be uncomfortably aware of, if they were contemplating doing something that the *popolo* would not approve. Hesitation on this score could be more than just a convenient excuse for inaction. In Florence, ‘Even though the poor never appeared in council meetings to voice their opinions, patrician counsellors were always aware of the popular mood.’⁹² In Venice, ‘popular opinion was a part of Venetian politics and cannot be neglected. People turned out in huge crowds on some occasions and were not hesitant about making themselves heard.’ Foreign relations were of particular interest to many residents of Venice who had no part to play in formal political debate, because their livelihoods were directly affected by them.⁹³

One of the hallmarks of popular government was that the *popolo minuto*, or at least those elements of the *popolo minuto* constituted by small tradesmen and independent artisans, were an intrinsic part of the political community. They would be eligible for political office, and could be chosen to sit on the most important bodies. Some offices would generally not be allotted to them in practice. They would be unlikely to serve as ambassadors or envoys (unless their community was small or in the throes of social or political upheaval, for example) and, except in the smallest communities, were unlikely to be considered suitable to hold the very highest office in communal government, such as the Captain of the People in Siena. They might well hold office less frequently than their more prosperous or socially prestigious neighbours. Nevertheless, in such regimes a respectable minor tradesman could find himself a member of the most powerful political

⁹¹ Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494*, p. 48.

⁹² Brucker, ‘The Florentine *popolo minuto*’, p. 176.

⁹³ Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (London, 1980), 49–51.

body in his community at least once in his lifetime, with his vote counting for as much as those of his colleagues. Once there, he might feel he had to defer to their opinions, or even be influenced in what he said or did by a powerful individual on whom he was dependent in some way in daily life, but it should not be assumed that this would normally be the case. If individual members of the *popolo minuto* were admitted occasionally to major offices or councils in regimes where they had no set quota, or if *artefici* had a set proportion of offices, they would not necessarily be mere ciphers, flattered into silent acquiescence by being allowed to sit with their social betters in the same council chamber. They could have clear opinions, that they might not be shy of expressing, on matters that had nothing to do with their personal interests or the interests of their social or economic group.

A broadly-based council, in which a substantial proportion of adult male, tax-paying citizens would have the opportunity to sit and to take part in effective decision-making, was the general defining characteristic of popular government. Assemblies such as the Council of the People in Siena were in practice, as well as in theory, the source of political authority, delegating power to the executive magistracies, but retaining wide powers to approve, sanction, direct and decide on a wide range of issues. If there was no such assembly among the political institutions of a community, or if what councils there were had become mere forms, with no real power to direct or discipline the executive or to reject what the executive decided, there could not be a popular government. In determining the character of these councils, the crucial questions are not just who and how many qualified for membership in them. How business was conducted in them, how decisions were reached, was just as important.

By the mid-fifteenth century, assemblies of all the adult male population of a town or city, usually known as the *arengo* or *parlamento*, were rare. Of the major republics, only Florence retained a *Parlamento* (which in theory was limited to members of guilds in any case), and that was a travesty of a popular council.⁹⁴ In Genoa, a 'general and public *parlamento* of all the *popolo* and commune of Genoa' held in the square before the cathedral approved the revision of the constitution, the *Regulae*, in 1413,⁹⁵ but that was the last

⁹⁴ See above, p. 166.

⁹⁵ ASG, Manoscritti di Parigi 19, ff. 31r–33r.

occasion on which such an assembly was summoned. The Venetian equivalent, the *Concio*, had not been summoned for decades before it was formally abolished in 1423.⁹⁶ In Macerata in the Marche of the Papal States, all the powers of the 'Parlamento Generale' were transferred to the General Council (because the Parlamento was said to be difficult to assemble) when new statutes for the city were issued in 1432. The fact that it was assembled in August 1443 to consider the surrender of Macerata to the papacy, however, suggests that there was still a sense that in such fundamental matters the Parlamento remained the embodiment of the *popolo*.⁹⁷

One instance of an *arengo* that survived throughout the fifteenth century was that of Udine in Friuli, but it was an instrument for the domination of a noble faction as much as the expression of the popular will. Generally it met once a year, and additionally in special circumstances such as during times of war or plague, to pass legislation and to elect members of the small council which handled routine business.⁹⁸ Such an assembly, where legislation was approved by votes given orally, appeared to one critic to be 'worse than the meanest village meeting'.⁹⁹ It was abolished in 1513, when the Venetians recovered control of the city following a rebellion in which the artisans and *popolo minuto* of Udine had supported the influential nobleman Antonio Savorgnan, who had been able to use the *arengo* as a channel of influence there. With the abolition of the *arengo*, the artisans were excluded from any role in the government, and Antonio Savorgnan's successor as faction leader, Girolamo Savorgnan, encouraged them to press for its restoration, but their protests were fruitless.¹⁰⁰

More common than such survivals were assemblies of heads of households, or of one representative from each household. This form of assembly may have developed, it is thought, from the *parlamento*, cutting down the numbers present and making it easier to organize.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Giorgio Cracco, 'Patriziato e oligarchia a Venezia nel Tre-Quattrocento', in *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations. I Quattrocento* (Florence, 1979), p. 79.

⁹⁷ Libero Paci, 'Le vicende politiche', in Aldo Adversi, Dante Cecchi and Libero Paci (eds), *Storia di Macerata*, 5 vols (Macerata, 1971-7), I, pp. 147, 165.

⁹⁸ Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1993), p. 45.

⁹⁹ 'pezo che la più trista visinanza de villani': Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, pp. 242-3; Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, p. 150.

¹⁰¹ Alessandro Dani, *I comuni dello stato di Siena e le loro assemblee (secc. XIV-XVIII). I caratteri di una cultura giuridico-politica* (Siena, 1998), p. 51.

They were most common in smaller communities, such as the townships subject to Siena. It has been estimated that assemblies of representatives of households played a role of some importance (with regular fixed meetings, having deliberative or electoral functions, or both) in over a third of the communes that had statutes in Sienese territory, and a marginal role in another quarter of the communes.¹⁰² According to the 1472 statute of Fighine, for example, the council of one man for each household had to be summoned when the elective councils 'had matters of great importance on their hands'.¹⁰³ The 1447 statute of Ravi declared that it was 'a beneficial and necessary thing that towns should be governed by the councils', and that the Sienese local official, the vicar, should summon one man from each household every time it was needful, so that each could give counsel for the good of the community.¹⁰⁴ Many of these assemblies survived into the sixteenth century and beyond, and not only in Sienese territory. At Montepulciano in the sixteenth century, the Council of the People consisted of 'one man from every house born and brought up, he and his father', in Montepulciano or its territory, or whose father had come from outside but been resident there for thirty years, owning fixed property and paying taxes.¹⁰⁵ In the small townships of the kingdom of Naples, 'all the citizens could attend the parlamenti, take part in the deliberations, if they had reached the requisite age, without distinction between social groups', and be elected to office.¹⁰⁶

In larger towns, such assemblies were not part of regular government, but they could still be summoned in exceptional circumstances. Having been ordered by the Duke of Savoy to reform the civic government of Turin in 1433, the ducal councillors consulted

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁴ M. Brogi, 'Lo Statuto di Ravi di Maremma (1447)', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, 99 (1992), p. 343.

¹⁰⁵ Elena Fasano Guarini, 'Principe ed oligarchie nella Toscana del '500', in *Forme e tecniche del potere nella città (secoli XIV-XVII)* (Università di Perugia, Annali della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche anni 1979-80, 16), p. 110.

¹⁰⁶ Giuseppe Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia: lineamenti di storia meridionale e due momenti di storia regionale*, 2nd edn (Florence, 1984), p. 99, citing N.F. Faraglia, *Il Comune nell'Italia meridionale* (Napoli, 1883), which I have not seen. Nor have I seen A. Tagliaferri, 'Identità e differenze nel processo formativo delle autonomie locali. Qualche osservazione su Comuni e Vicinie dell'Italia settentrionale', in *Poteri, assemblee, autonomie (Il lungo cammino verso la sovranità popolare). Miscellanea in memoria di Roberto Celli* (Udine, 1989), which deals with such assemblies in northern Italy.

an assembly of heads of households.¹⁰⁷ Some of the councils that met in Genoa during the troubles of 1506–7 were described as being composed of heads of households.¹⁰⁸ In Milan, the advent of the Repubblica Ambrosiana after the death of Duke Filippo Maria Visconti in 1447 brought the revival of a council, the Council of Nine Hundred, which consisted of 150 heads of households for each ‘Porta’ of the city, and was given significant powers in political and financial matters, and in the election of some officials.¹⁰⁹ The council of Nine Hundred was not an assembly of all the heads of households in Milan, but only of a certain number, elected at parish level.¹¹⁰ A council of a representative of every household in Milan would have been far too numerous to deal readily and regularly with important business.

Even when councils were not a *parlamento* or an *arengo*, nor composed of representatives of households, a significant proportion of adult males of the community could have the right to sit in them. The seventy to eighty men who attended sessions of the General Council in Acquapendente (in the province of the Patrimony of the Papal States) represented perhaps one in five of the adult males of the population of fourteen or fifteen hundred.¹¹¹ As membership in the Great Council of Vicenza was for life, and *de facto* hereditary, and other offices, theoretically open to all citizens, were in practice always given to members of the Great Council, Vicenza could represent one type of oligarchic government. But if it is borne in mind that the Great Council had over five hundred members, with the 629 members in 1510 representing about 13 per cent of the adult males of the city, it was not a very restricted oligarchy.¹¹² The numbers qualified to sit in the Great Council instituted in Florence in

¹⁰⁷ Barbero, ‘La vita e le strutture politiche nel quadro della bipolarità signore-comune’, p. 548.

¹⁰⁸ Pandiani, ‘Un anno di storia genovese’, pp. 328, 339–40, 372.

¹⁰⁹ Francesco Cognasso, *I Visconti* (Milan, 1987), p. 507; Marina Spinelli, ‘Ricerche per una storia della Repubblica Ambrosiana II’, *Nuova rivista storica*, 71 (1987), pp. 30–2.

¹¹⁰ Cognasso, *I Visconti*, p. 507.

¹¹¹ Laura Andreani, ‘Le riformanze di Acquapendente (1452–1453)’ in *Storie a confronto. Le Riformanze dei Comuni della Toscana alla metà del Quattrocento* (Rome, 1995), pp. 19–20. The calculation is based on an estimate of adult males constituting a quarter of the population.

¹¹² James S. Grubb, *Firstborn of Venice: Vicenza in the Early Renaissance State* (Baltimore, 1988), pp. 79, 90.

1494 were even larger: about 3,300 in April 1496, for example.¹¹³ Until the advent of the Florentine Great Council, the Council of the People in Siena may well have been the largest regular assembly with substantial political power. Something like twelve or fifteen per cent of Sienese adult males would have been permanent members of the council that was for much of the fifteenth century the heart of Sienese political life. Numbers would vary according to how many men living at any one time had served at least one term as Prior, or been admitted in an exceptional procedure in the repeated changes of regime and reforms of the Council in the 1480s and 1490s (and not been subject to political proscription later). Perhaps 2,000 men would have had the right to sit in this Council for life during the period 1430 to 1494; about twice the number of men who sat for a year in Lucca's General Council during the same period.¹¹⁴

Leaving aside the fact that it was composed only of nobles, the Great Council of Venice can be compared to the larger assemblies of popular governments. Contemporaries did so: when Venice was praised as an example of 'mixed' government, the Great Council (Maggior Consiglio) was identified as the 'democratic', 'popular' element.¹¹⁵ It had over 2,000 members—the largest permanent assembly of any European city¹¹⁶—and in theory had a major role in deliberating and deciding on policy. In practice, however, by the mid fifteenth century it had already lost much of its power to the Senate, and many patricians showed little interest in the majority of its business. The quorum could be as low as 200, yet it might be difficult to assemble even that small proportion of the members.¹¹⁷ By the end

¹¹³ Nicolai Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consiglio Maggiore di Firenze (1494–99)', *Archivio storico italiano*, 112 (1954), p. 181.

¹¹⁴ Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494*, p. 114. For a comparison of the membership of the General Council and College of Anziani of Lucca, and the Council of the People and the Concistoro of Siena, see Christine Shaw, 'Political elites in Siena and Lucca in the fifteenth century', *Bulletin of the Society for Renaissance Studies*, 14, 1 (Oct. 1996), pp. 9–12.

¹¹⁵ Felix Gilbert, 'The Venetian constitution in Florentine political thought', in Nicolai Rubinstein, *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1968), pp. 468–71; Matteo Casini, 'Note sul linguaggio politico veneziano del Rinascimento', in Simonetta Adorni Braccesi and Mario Ascheri (eds), *Politica e cultura nelle Repubbliche italiane dal Medioevo all'Età moderna* (Rome, 2001), pp. 320–2.

¹¹⁶ Berengo, *L'Europa delle città*, p. 178.

¹¹⁷ Giuseppe Maranini, *La costituzione di Venezia dopo la serrata del Maggior Consiglio* (1931; Florence, 1974), pp. 215–6; Donald Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 152–3.

of the century, after the age of qualification for the council was lowered to eighteen, the number of members increased to 3,000, out of a population of about 90,000 (and therefore representing about the same proportion of adult males as members of the Council of the People in Siena did). It became, according to Giorgio Cracco, a 'parking area' for the mass of nobles, who were interested only in election to some salaried office.¹¹⁸

Councils in Genoa had in some ways greater powers than the Council of the People in Siena, but they were not regular assemblies and had no fixed membership. They had no fixed name either, although they were sometimes referred to as the Great Council or the 'Consilium convocatorum', the 'council of those called together' (these were not two distinct types of assembly). As and when the Doge and the Anziani (or occasionally the Doge and another official body) thought it needful, a number of citizens ranging from a few dozen to several hundred were summoned to give advice and to take decisions on a particular problem or matter of current concern. Who would be summoned was entirely at the discretion of the Doge and whoever helped him to compile the list. The only constraint on the selection would be the obligation to observe the usual proportions of half nobles and half *popolari*, among the *popolari* half *artefici* and half merchants, and for each of these three groups, half Black (Guelf) and half White (Ghibelline). For all the *ad hoc* character of these councils, the decisions they reached were binding on the Doge and the executive councils. The Doge might try to manipulate the assemblies, but there were very real limits to his ability to do so. Not the least of these limitations was the importance the Genoese attached to effective consultation of public opinion. Often those summoned to a council would recommend that a 'scrutiny' should be held, which in Genoa meant not an election, but officials or a special commission being charged with the task of going into the city to ask citizens for their views, or inviting them to come to the palace to speak in confidence if they wished.¹¹⁹

In Florence, the Council of the People and the Council of the Commune survived under the Medici regime. In the mid-fifteenth century, their approval was still necessary for legislation on impor-

¹¹⁸ Cracco, 'Patriziato e oligarchia a Venezia', p. 87.

¹¹⁹ Shaw, 'Counsel and consent in fifteenth-century Genoa', pp. 838–40, 842–5, 849–51, 856–7.

tant matters, including finance and constitutional changes. The members of both councils sat for four months: they were chosen by lot, their names drawn from electoral purses prepared by the Signoria and its advisory colleges. The Council of the People was composed of 285 Guelf *popolari* citizens of Florence; several official bodies also took part in the meetings, and had votes. The Council of the Commune had 252 members, including 40 'magnates' alongside the *popolari*. Other magnates, including the Captains of the Guelf party, were among the officials who were *ex officio* members of this council.¹²⁰ A third of the *popolari* members of both councils had to be members of the minor guilds, the rest, of the major guilds. How these councils were elected made it difficult for the Medici and their allies to exercise control on who the members would be, and their capacity and willingness to reject and block important measures made them an inconvenience and an annoyance to the Medici regime. The leaders of the regime wanted to bring 'the power of the councils of the *popolo* into a few people', the Milanese ambassador was told in 1451.¹²¹ To some Florentines, however, the proper functioning of the Councils of the People and the Commune was an aspect of the 'customary power of the *popolo*' ('solita populi potestas').¹²² There was particular resistance in the Councils to some of the Medicean financial proposals, and widespread opposition to the imposition of taxation 'without the deliberation of the councils, where', commented a Siennese observer in 1458, 'there are many members, including some who do not really understand the matter.'¹²³ Medicean expertise in financial and constitutional manipulation eventually managed to outflank the Councils, with the Council of One Hundred (the Cento), set up in 1458, in particular limiting their legislative powers. By the late 1480s, they had been 'deprived of the last shred of their original power'.¹²⁴

Following the expulsion of the Medici in November 1494, a Parlamento held on 2 December not only approved a law abolishing

¹²⁰ Guidi, *Il governo della Città-repubblica di Firenze*, I, pp. 140–3 (the figures he gives for the constituents of the Council of the Commune are not entirely clear).

¹²¹ Paolo Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali: le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega italica (1450–1455)*, (Florence, 1992), p. 37, n. 126.

¹²² Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, p. 86.

¹²³ ASS, Particolari Famiglie Senesi, 145, f. 178r.

¹²⁴ Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, p. 235; see *ibid.*, *ad indicem* for the Councils of the People and the Commune under the Medici regime.

the Medicean councils, but declared that the Councils of the People and the Commune should have 'all the authority and power' of 'all the *popolo* and commune of Florence'.¹²⁵ These two councils approved the law instituting what would soon become known as the Great Council (Consiglio Maggiore), but was originally called the Council of the People and the Commune. All those whose names had just been placed in the new electoral purses of the two Councils and who would not otherwise qualify for the new one, were to be members of it.¹²⁶

The establishment of qualification for office in the 'Tre Maggiori' (the Signoria and its advisory boards), or direct descent within three generations from a man qualified for the Tre Maggiori, as the criteria for membership of the Great Council, made its inception in one way a *serrata*, the establishment of a fixed, closed ruling group. 'Far from opening up the class of politically enfranchised citizens to new men, the introduction of the Consiglio Maggiore was in effect a *serrata*', it has been argued, because 'the constitutional reforms of December 1494 led to little change in the composition of the Florentine political class or in its inner circles of position and influence.' In advancing this argument, however, Roslyn Pesman Cooper acknowledged that this was still 'the largest and most open regime that Florence had hitherto experienced'.¹²⁷ To contemporary Florentines, perceiving the Great Council as a fusion of the Councils of the People and the Commune, and aware of the large number of men who qualified for membership in it, including some artisans and small tradesmen, it seemed the embodiment of the 'universale', of all the citizens.¹²⁸

With so many entitled to sit in the Council, it was decided they would be divided into three sections, who would take it in turn to sit for six months at a time. But there were continual difficulties in assembling a quorum, and in August 1495 it was decided to do away with these divisions. In April 1496, there were about 900 men temporarily disqualified because they owed arrears of tax. This left about 2,400 who could attend meetings—but still it proved difficult to

¹²⁵ Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consiglio Maggiore', p. 151.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 154–7.

¹²⁷ Pesman Cooper, 'The Florentine ruling group under the "Governo Popolare"', pp. 71–2.

¹²⁸ Varotti, *Gloria e ambizione politica*, pp. 20–1, 351.

assemble a quorum, now set at 1,000.¹²⁹ The considerable number suffering temporary disqualification because of tax arrears was only part of the problem. Many found attendance burdensome, particularly when no business could be transacted because the meeting was inquorate. For the lack of fifty or sixty men, lamented Domenico Cecchi in a pamphlet published in 1497, all the others are inconvenienced, and it makes the council tedious to them, being forced to sit there for hours and then not be able to do anything. Many, he maintained, did not turn up because of this.¹³⁰ Even when a quorum was reached, much time was spent going through complicated voting procedures on unimportant matters. Piero Parenti voiced the irritation of citizens at 'the inconvenience of sitting in the Great Council five or six solid hours at least once almost every week'.¹³¹ Complaints about this became so frequent that the Signoria was urged to take action to speed up council business, 'to do away with the meetings and the grumbles and the bad feeling that this gives rise to every day.' Savonarola repeatedly warned against the dangers of disaffection from the Council, caused by such grievances.¹³²

Savonarola also commented on another problem that hindered the proper working of the Great Council: many of those attending were not accustomed to taking part in public debates. In a sermon he delivered in June 1496, he gave instructions on how to do this: let speakers say their piece without interruption, and if you disagree, then speak yourself, not attacking what had been said but commenting politely and then giving your own views forcefully. (And don't, he warned, believe all you hear.)¹³³ His remarks highlight an important consideration in assessing how effective an expression of popular government a council might be, and one that was as significant as who the members were, which is the question that often receives most attention. How proceedings were conducted in the councils, how much freedom of debate there was, whether those present had

¹²⁹ Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consiglio Maggiore', pp. 160, 163, 172–4, 176–8, 181–2.

¹³⁰ Umberto Mazzone, *"El buon governo". Un progetto di riforma generale nella Firenze savonaroliana* (Florence, 1978), p. 15.

¹³¹ J. Schnitzer, *Savonarola nach den Aufzeichnungen des Florentiners: Piero Parenti* (Leipzig, 1910), p. 292.

¹³² Mazzone, *"El buon governo"*, pp. 34–5.

¹³³ Quoted in Alison Brown, 'Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses: A changing model', in Peter Denley and Caroline Elam (eds), *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London, 1988), p. 61 (original Italian at pp. 68–9).

to stick to the agenda put before them or had the power to introduce subjects or proposals at their own initiative—these questions need to be asked if the nature of a government is to be properly understood.

One reason why Savonarola had to give guidance on how to debate, was that there had not been any real discussion in the Councils of the People and the Commune. Participants there could only speak in favour of a proposal. Theoretically, freedom of speech was regarded as an important part of Florentine *libertà*, but that meant freedom of debate within the political elite (and there were significant, if informal, constraints on that under the Medicean regime), not in the councils most representative of the wider *popolo*.¹³⁴ Some speakers in the Councils of the People and the Commune may have found ways to damn proposals by faint praise, but the records of the councils do not include accounts of the speeches, so the strength of opposition to a proposal from the executive can be gauged only from its defeat when a vote was taken. If councillors were sufficiently persistent in refusing to give their approval to legislation—a proposal could be put to them a maximum of fifteen times under the statutes—they could thwart the wishes of the leaders of the regime. But there was no opportunity for members of the Councils to make their own proposals: indeed, there were penalties for speakers who introduced subjects not on the official agenda.¹³⁵

Constraints on freedom of speech in the popular councils of Florence seem to have been greater than in equivalent councils in the other major republics. In Siena there was a rule that speakers in the Council of the People should only speak on matters put before them (except when there was a *proposta generale*), although that rule was not always observed. Regulations promulgated in July 1439, for example, indicate by what they forbade how some councillors might behave. As those attending the councils should behave properly and ‘speak in an orderly manner on the subjects proposed, and without insulting anyone and without causing a scandal’, it was agreed that ‘in future anyone speaking from the tribune in the Council of the People of our city must and will be obliged to speak with propriety (*onestà*), using words in keeping with the honour of the Signoria

¹³⁴ Nicolai Rubinstein, ‘Florentine constitutionalism and Medici ascendancy in the fifteenth century’, in *idem* (ed.), *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1968), pp. 456–62.

¹³⁵ Guidi, *Il governo della Città-repubblica di Firenze*, II, pp. 137–40.

and of that place'. He should not stray from the proposition put to the Council by the Concistoro. 'And if he does make some incidental point, as at times one cannot avoid making', he should not do it in such a way that the Concistoro might rule that he was changing the subject.¹³⁶ At times of particular tension, as during the 1450s, it was not only injurious words, but threats of violence that could disturb peaceful debate in the Council. One of the provisions made in August 1456 was that the Concistoro would be bound to investigate complaints of the attempted intimidation of anyone who had said or done anything in the Council of the People or other public offices, which had been for the good of the city but against the will or particular interests of some individuals.¹³⁷

The behaviour of Venetian patricians in the Great Council could also leave something to be desired. They could go wandering about during debates, and hold private conversations. In 1455, there was a specific prohibition of bringing weapons into the council hall (apparently this was a question of decorum rather than concern about intimidation). Councillors could be disciplined if it was considered their remarks about officials, or other individuals, had overstepped the mark. But it was possible for them to be critical of officials and of official policy, and all councillors had the right to speak. Debates were confined to proposals brought before the Council by executive bodies, but went on until all those who wanted to contribute had had their say.¹³⁸ How much freedom of debate there was in the General Council of Lucca is difficult to judge.¹³⁹ Individual contributions to council proceedings were not recorded. From the official account of the formation and approval of a delicate political decree concerning the exile of those deemed potential troublemakers in 1482, it appears that members of the General Council could have the opportunity to state their opinions and to shape policy.¹⁴⁰

Procedures in the councils of the last of the five major independent republics, Genoa, were the most interesting of all. There, councillors

¹³⁶ ASS, Concistoro 441, f. 27r-v.

¹³⁷ Shaw, 'Provisions following "Proposte generali"', p. 126.

¹³⁸ Donald E. Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 240-2.

¹³⁹ Bratchel does not discuss the procedures in the Council, only its membership, in his *Lucca 1430-1494*.

¹⁴⁰ Girolamo Tommasi, *Sommario della Storia di Lucca*, ed. Domenico Corsi (Lucca, 1969; reprint of 1847 edn), Documenti, pp. 140-2.

were summoned to debate a problem rather than a proposal; the subject for discussion would be set out in a usually brief statement to those assembled. All could speak if they wished. If the Doge tried too obviously to direct the debate, councillors could simply ignore his strictures, and he had no powers to punish them. They could, and did, introduce other matters of concern if they wanted to do so. Criticism, more or less veiled, of the Doge would be recorded by the chancellors in the official record. At the end of the debate, a vote would be taken on all the proposals that had been made by the councillors, and the one that won the most votes—not necessarily a majority—was adopted as a decree and was binding on the Doge and the executive committees. If the proposal proved unworkable, another council had to be summoned to debate the matter afresh; sometimes the councillors simply told the officials to try again. In their procedures, the Genoese councils were the most “democratic” of all those of the major republics.¹⁴¹ Given the freedom with which those summoned to the councils could and did introduce new subjects into the debates, and the freedom they evidently had to approach informally the Doge and other officials about matters of concern that they thought required discussion in a council, the Genoese had no need for any equivalent of the Sienese *proposte generali*, the opportunities for councillors to bring up any matter of concern to them.

Proposte generali were a feature not only of the councils of the city of Siena, but also of those of the subject towns and townships in Sienese territory. Here they gave rise to some lively debates: the sessions where the *proposte generali* were put ‘constituted the most important, most open and most vital moment of the life of the communal institution.’ It was a reminder of ‘the legitimation and the essence’ of the councils. ‘It was in these moments that everyone could have his say on the common welfare, put suggestions that had been thought over at length, put forward complaints and remonstrations.’¹⁴² Nor were *proposte generali* peculiar to the Sienese state. In the Papal States, in *Acquapendente*, the practice was ‘according to the statutes and laudable custom, every year there should be a *proposta generale*, by which anyone is allowed to say and advise anything he pleases for the benefit of the commune’ and the papal

¹⁴¹ Shaw, ‘Counsel and consent in fifteenth-century Genoa’, pp. 846–51, 855–61.

¹⁴² Dani, *I comuni dello stato di Siena*, pp. 71–3.

government.¹⁴³ In Orte, at the first meeting of the General Council after a new board of Priors took up office every two months, the first item on the agenda was 'if anyone wants to counsel anything concerning the welfare of the city'. This could give rise, as in Siena, to a wide range of proposals concerning the need for justice or concord among the citizens, or concerning practical issues such as prices or the protection of crops.¹⁴⁴ It would be interesting to know how widespread this kind of procedure was, for proposte generali surely provide a significant index of genuinely participatory government.

On the other hand, the enthusiasm of councillors for their work should not be exaggerated. The Great Council of Florence was not the only assembly to have problems in reaching its quorum. Nor was it the only one for which the sessions when elections for offices were to be held, or the names of officeholders were to be drawn from electoral purses, were among those that were best attended. The same problem could arise with the Great Council in Venice, for example.¹⁴⁵

If there were frequent, regular, or lengthy sittings of a council, artisans and tradesmen in particular might find the calls on their time excessive. 'Time is precious for merchants and artisans', said one speaker at a discussion of the problem in Florence in 1497.¹⁴⁶ When the bell rings for the council, Savonarola remonstrated in a sermon, this man stays at his shop, that man leaves for his villa. 'When you have to go to the Council, don't delay so long. Put your shop in order quickly and say "I have to go".'¹⁴⁷ As his comments indicate, it was not only the problem of taking time off work that caused councillors to absent themselves. Many citizens liked to escape the worst of the summer heat by going to their villas in the countryside. The Florentines had to resort to fines, or even ordering that citizens who missed important meetings should stay in the city for a month or more.¹⁴⁸ The Siense dealt with the same problem in the 1450s

¹⁴³ Angela Lanconelli, 'Il "tranquillo e pacifico stato" nelle città del Patrimonio a metà Quattrocento attraverso la lettura delle Riformanze', in *Storie a confronto: le Riformanze dei comuni della Toscana alla metà del Quattrocento* (Rome, 1995), p. 192.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; for the frequency of the proposte in Orte, see Massimo Miglio, 'Ad honorem et gloriam communis et populi civitatis Ortane: vita quotidiana e buono stato', in *Storie a confronto*, p. 201.

¹⁴⁵ Cracco, 'Patriziato e oligarchia a Venezia', p. 87.

¹⁴⁶ Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consiglio Maggiore', p. 168.

¹⁴⁷ Mazzone, 'El buon governo', p. 32.

¹⁴⁸ Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consiglio Maggiore', pp. 192–3.

by instructing local officials in the countryside to order *riseduti* who were staying in their area to go to Siena for council meetings on certain days.¹⁴⁹

Another cause of absenteeism was reluctance by the wealthier and better educated members to share the council benches with their poorer and less educated neighbours. This was a problem that was perhaps becoming more prevalent in the early sixteenth century but was also evident earlier. It affected communities throughout Italy, where councils bringing together men from diverse social groups persisted. It could be used as a justification for reforming the councils, to make the membership more exclusive. In the Sienese township of Pereta, for example, the statutes promulgated in 1457 were amended soon after to replace a council of one man from each household by an elective council of 35 members, because the customary assembly included 'those who do not understand, as well as those who do, and the vote of one is worth as much as the vote of another'.¹⁵⁰ The reason given for the replacement of the General Council of one man from each household in another Sienese township, Gavorrano, by an elective council of 40 members in 1478, was that it had included 'many sorts of men, the learned and the ignorant, and of various conditions, and young and old . . . which causes no small inconvenience, often to the prejudice of the community, for lack of understanding'.¹⁵¹

The same objections were raised in some towns in Sicily in 1522. In the General Council of Castrogiovanni, 'the vote of the wisest man' was worth 'as much as that of a most ignorant plebeian', and it was proposed that it should be replaced by an elective council. There was a similar proposal for the town of Capizzi. After the officials and gentlemen and other worthy men had given their considered opinion in the General Council there, it was said, some *popolare* or rustic could say just the opposite, and 'the *popolo minuto*, because there are more of them and they are less alert to the common benefit and utility of the republic agree with him', and his proposal carries the day 'because the *popolo minuto* have more votes than do the men of worth'.¹⁵² A decade later, the legate of the Marche in the Papal

¹⁴⁹ ASS, Concistoro 2178: Circular letter from Concistoro, 7 Sept. 1450 (and other similar letters in this packet).

¹⁵⁰ Dani, *I comuni dello stato di Siena*, p. 119.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁵² Carmelo Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando il Cattolico a Carlo V: l'esperienza siciliana 1475-1525*, 2 vols (Soveria Mannelli, 1982), I, p. 266.

States ordered a reform of the councils of the town of Sanseverino, because 'grave and lettered men' did not want to take part in councils made up of 'a multitude of the boorish and the inexperienced'. In future, 'those who work with their hands and the unsuitable' ('mechanicis et inhabilibus') were to be excluded.¹⁵³

In fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy, popular government was not thought of as government by representatives of the guilds, and it was becoming less useful to think of it as government that excluded the nobles. When contemporaries wrote or spoke of popular government, of a 'governo popolare', what they usually had in mind was a government in which a substantial proportion of the adult male population, from a range of social groups, could be eligible to participate in councils or to hold office. Such a concept was not new—in the fourteenth century, the influential jurist Bartolo da Sassoferrato had distinguished popular government, 'regimen ad populum', in which the community was governed 'per multitudinem' (by the many), from the 'regimen per paucos', government by a few rich, worthy and prudent men.¹⁵⁴ To advocates and defenders of popular government, it was right and fitting that many men should have the chance to have a part in running the affairs of their state. To critics of popular government, it meant that plebeians and those considered unfit to govern would be involved. By the sixteenth century, the critics' view was becoming more prevalent. Popular government still had its defenders, but changing social attitudes and external pressures were making it more difficult to maintain.

¹⁵³ Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*, pp. 120–1.

¹⁵⁴ D. Quaglioni, *Politica e diritto nel Trecento italiano. Il "De tyranno" di Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1314–1357)* (Florence, 1983), pp. 150–1, 163–5 (from 'Tractatus de regimine civitatis').

CHAPTER EIGHT

OLIGARCHY

The transition from a broadly-based civic government to a narrowly-based one, as the example of Siena makes very clear, could be a complicated process. There would not necessarily be a straightforward linear progression from one to the other. Nor did a change in regime necessarily bring new institutions—sometimes the same body, like the *Balia* of Siena, could be part of either popular or oligarchical government. A council that had been the heart of a popular government could be transmuted into the characteristic expression of an oligarchic regime. At some stage, decisions would generally have to be made to alter the regulations about who could sit in councils or qualify for political office. Such changes might be the means by which a shift towards oligarchy was pushed along deliberately, and might provoke resistance. On the other hand, they might be adjustments which reflected developments in political society that had been happening gradually, over a long time, and would seem natural and desirable to most of those concerned. Ambition, and greed for power and its fruits, among a small group can be seen to be the motives for reforms in some cases. In others, it was a more general transformation of attitudes as to who had the right to be involved in politics and government, or, perhaps, as to what the most effective form of government was. Whatever the circumstances, without a degree of consent from their fellow citizens, the most ambitious oligarchs would find it difficult to win and to keep power.

Sienese who desired a more oligarchic form of government in their city found in Bologna a model that had great appeal.¹ It was not that they hankered after subjection to the papacy and the permanent presence of a papal legate or governor in their city: they were thinking of the institutions of the communal government. What appealed to them was the body known as the Sixteen. This was the kind of regime that the Sienese associates of Alfonso, Duke of Calabria were said to have wanted in 1480, 'wishing to restrict the *reggimento*

¹ Pertici, 'Per la datazione del *Libro d'ore* di Filiziana Bichi', p. 163.

to sixteen as in Bologna'.² A Balìa of sixteen or eighteen was, according to Giacoppo Petrucci, what he and his allies had in mind for Siena in 1494.³ What was the nature of the body that some Siennese found so attractive?

The government of the Sixteen of Bologna has been seen as an early exemplar of the kind of regime that would become common in the towns and cities of sixteenth century Italy—one centred on a council with a restricted number of permanent members, who recruited replacements by co-option, usually choosing close relatives of those who had died or retired.⁴ The office of the Sixteen Reformers (*Sedici riformatori*) had begun in 1393–4 as a Balìa, a temporary commission with extraordinary powers. Although subsequent boards of the Sixteen had an important role in the government of Bologna, it did not become a permanent institution until 1445. Following the assassination of Annibale Bentivoglio, the party leader who had dominated the political life of the city,⁵ on 27 June 1445, the Anziani, 'gathering together some citizens, by common consent elected sixteen men to reform the offices of honour and of profit of the city, and they were called the *Sedici riformatori dello stato*'.⁶ Under the direction of Sante Bentivoglio, Annibale's successor, the Bolognese agreed with Pope Nicholas V the Capitoli of 1447 that set out the basic roles of the civic institutions and of the representatives of the papacy in the government of Bologna. These provided for a partnership between the Sixteen and the papal legate or governor. Together, for example, they were to elect all the other officials, including the Anziani, to compile the electoral purses, and to decide how the communal revenues were to be spent. Together, they were to elect the successors of the Sixteen at the end of their term of office. It was the Capitoli that provided the sanction for the lasting dominance of the Sixteen over the other civic institutions—the section of the revised civic statutes of 1454 that defined the powers of the offices of the commune made no mention of this.⁷

² 'volendo ridurre el regimento a sedici al modo di Bologna' (Cantoni, *Frammento di un diario senese*, p. 921).

³ ASF, MAP 19, 586: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 12 June 1494, Siena.

⁴ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 150.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 121–4.

⁶ Cherubino Ghirardacci, *Della Historia di Bologna, parte terza*, ed. Albano Sorbelli, *RR.II.SS.*, XXXIII, part 1 (Città di Castello, 1915–16), p. 107.

⁷ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, pp. 112–5, 123–4, 145.

The members of the Sixteen were given the power to choose their successors; they used it to make their own membership *de facto* permanent. When the time came in June 1448 to choose the new board of the Sixteen, they decided by fourteen votes to one that, for the benefit and augmentation of the government, and its peace and quiet, it would be best to reappoint the sitting members to hold office for the next year.⁸ In September 1449, circumstances were not right for the Sixteen simply to reappoint themselves again. By then at least two members, Romeo Pepoli and Giovanni de' Fantuzzi, were in open conflict with the Bentivoglio faction and were being excluded from the deliberations of the Sixteen, and the Bentivoglio faction were also at odds with the papal legate.⁹ This time the members were formally elected by the civic councils, the Anziani and the Council of Six Hundred. The Bentivoglio soon established a better working relationship with the new legate, Cardinal Bessarion, who arrived in Bologna in March 1450. He agreed in December 1450 to the Sixteen confirming themselves in office for a year, and then indefinitely, as they and the legate should decide. Only half of those who had renewed their own term of office in 1448 were also among the members of the Sixteen who took this decisive step in making themselves permanent members of the most powerful civic magistracy in Bologna: in effect, an institutionalized oligarchy.¹⁰

As the years passed, and members who died were usually replaced by their brothers or their sons, it took shape as an oligarchy that was hereditary as well. This practice became embodied in a regulation in May 1459, when the Sixteen decided that if any of their members who died had brothers or sons aged thirty or more, the one who received most votes (and in the event of a tie, the elder) was to be co-opted to take his place. If the governor or legate—with the consent of the Sixteen—wanted 'another worthy citizen' to be considered as a potential member, there was to be a vote on several other citizens as well, to determine which one would join them.

⁸ ASBol, Comune governo 395, f. 61r-v.

⁹ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, pp. 125-6; ASBol, Comune governo 414, 67: Romeo Pepoli and Giovanni Fantuzzi to Anziani and Gonfaloniere di Giustizia of Bologna, 4 Aug. 1459, Castel San Pietro; Emilio Nasalli Rocca di Corneliano, 'Il Card. Bessarione, Legato Pontificio in Bologna (1450-1455)', *Atti e memorie della R. Deputazione di storia patria per le Province di Romagna*, Ser. 4, 20 (1930), p. 27.

¹⁰ ASBol, Comune governo 395, f. 62r; 383, f. 11v (and earlier in the register, *passim*, for the names of the Sixteen in office in 1450).

At the same time, 'considering the city's government is dealt with better and more advantageously by a greater number than by a few, [and] wishing to divide the burden of this regime and government among more men', the Sixteen themselves voted to add seven 'notable citizens' as supernumeraries.¹¹ Another reason for the election of the supernumeraries, not stated in the original decree, was the difficulty there could be in assembling a quorum because members of the Sixteen were ill or absent from the city. Arrangements were made in August 1460 extending the opportunities for supernumeraries to vote in the place of absent members; generally they only had the right to express their opinion, not to vote.¹²

There were complaints about the members of the Sixteen entrenching themselves in office. On a visit to Bologna by Pius II in 1459, the orator chosen by the Sixteen to greet the pope, Bornio da Sala, to their embarrassment used the opportunity to denounce the mal-government of the city, declaring that some were tyrants while others were slaves. Pius clearly enjoyed his diatribe, described by one chronicler as 'true but biting',¹³ but did not use it as a pretext for reform. His successor, Paul II, however, was inclined to challenge the deviations from the regime set out in the Capitoli of Nicholas V. When the usual request for the confirmation of the Capitoli was made to the new pope in September 1464, he refused, on the grounds that the Sixteen had turned what ought to be a temporary office into a permanent one. Not only was this contrary to the Capitoli, he argued, but was unfitting for good government and a properly-constituted polity.¹⁴

Rather than insist on the annual elections envisaged in the Capitoli, however, Paul proposed that the members of the Sixteen should be divided into two equal groups, who would each hold office for a year at a time. Giovanni Bentivoglio (head of the faction since Sante's death in 1462) protested that he and his friends would rather die than agree to the smallest change to the system that had become

¹¹ 'considerantes status civitatum melius et salubrius per plures quam per pauciores [sic] gubernari, volentes onus hoc regiminis et gubernationis inter plures parti . . . ' (ASBol, Comune governo 384, Reg. 3, ff. 125v-127r.)

¹² *Ibid.*, Reg. 4, f. 59r.

¹³ Girolamo de' Borselli, *Cronica gestorum ac factorum memorabilium civitatis Bononie*, ed. Albano Sorbelli, *RR.II.SS.*, 23 part II (Città di Castello, 1912-29), pp. 94-5; Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, I, pp. 395-7.

¹⁴ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 147.

established. Eventually a modification to Paul's proposal, with the two groups of the Sixteen alternating every six months instead of every year, and Giovanni Bentivoglio sitting continuously, was accepted. The special position attributed to Giovanni Bentivoglio may have been the crucial change; he soon decided that this was a great enhancement of his own position in Bologna.¹⁵ The others gained papal recognition that their tenure of office was permanent, but it was stipulated that on the death of a member, his son could be co-opted only if he had reached the age of thirty, and he had the prudence and gravity the office required.¹⁶ This provision was elaborated by the Sixteen when they first divided in June 1466. Considering that they bore 'all the burden and weight of the government' of Bologna ('totum onus ac pondus regiminis'), making great efforts and exposing themselves to danger, they thought it was 'just and appropriate' that if one of them died his place should be given to his son or his brother 'and not taken from his family'. More was to be hoped, they declared, from the loyalty and integrity of such sons or brothers towards the present regime ('statum') than from 'outside families' ('familiarum externarum').¹⁷

Ostensibly, the division of the Sixteen into two separate boards, alternating at six-monthly intervals, continued until the office was replaced by a new council, the Forty, in 1506. At least this was the case for those meetings held in the presence of the legate or his lieutenant. Meetings to decide on the co-optation of new members were the only plenary ones recorded as taking place with the papal representatives, and the legate or his lieutenant was present at nearly every meeting minuted from April 1478 in all but one of the extant registers. Most of the decisions taken were on administrative business concerning buildings, or revenues; only a few appointments to offices were noted. There is little in these registers of the divided boards to indicate that the Sixteen were the most powerful civic magistracy in Bologna. If this was all they dealt with, then very little power had been left to the civic government by the papal officials.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cecilia Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna: A Study in Despotism* (London, 1937), pp. 61–2.

¹⁶ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 148.

¹⁷ ASBol, Comune governo 386, Reg. 6, f. 42v.

¹⁸ ASBol, Comune governo 387, Reg. 8; 388, Reg. 10; 389, Reg. 11 and 12.

But there are indications that from at least the late 1470s the full board of the Sixteen was meeting frequently as well. The anomalous register of their minutes, which cover the period from April 1478 to May 1484, recorded meetings where more than the eleven members of the Sixteen who were officially sitting (the 'sedentes') were present and voting; there is no mention of the presence of the legate or of his lieutenant. The business dealt with tended to be much more political in nature—the appointment of officials and ambassadors, ratification of the peace at the end of the Pazzi War in 1480, matters concerning troops in the service of Bologna.¹⁹ Probably there were other registers like this which have been lost. It is clear from the correspondence of the Sixteen that they were dealing with politically sensitive matters, including relations with other Italian powers, that left no trace in the registers of the meetings with the legate or his lieutenant. It is likely that these plenary meetings of the Sixteen were held outside the government palace: Giovanni Bentivoglio's palace seems a probable venue. In any case, the institutionalized oligarchy of Bologna had evidently found a way of circumventing the efforts of the papal government to split it up.

By the 1490s the members of the Balìa of Siena were advancing on the road to achieving the position the Sixteen had established for themselves in Bologna, but they still had some way to go. The Balìa had to negotiate a renewal of their mandate every five years, and could not assume that the Council of the People would grant it. Their control over appointments to office was far from complete, and certainly not unchallenged. There was still considerable resentment in Siena at the relegation of the Concistoro to a subordinate role. If there was any consistent strength of feeling in Bologna that the Anziani should have more power, the Sixteen do not appear to have been troubled by it. What did trouble some members of the Sixteen was the privileged position of the Bentivoglio. The power of the Sixteen was conditioned by the dominance of Sante and then Giovanni Bentivoglio, just as by the late 1490s the power of the Sienese Balìa was tempered by the drive for supremacy of Pandolfo Petrucci.

Members holding their seats for life, recruitment of new members by co-option, often from among close relatives of those serving or

¹⁹ ASBol, Comune governo 388, Reg. 9.

being replaced, or outright inheritance of seats—these were generally characteristics of oligarchic legislative and deliberative councils, rather than of executive bodies like the Sixteen of Bologna. Less common than oligarchic councils, and perhaps largely confined to independent republics or subject cities that had retained a significant measure of autonomy, powerful executive committees tended to have members elected for a short term, although seats on them might circulate among a restricted group holding office frequently.

In the republic of Lucca, for instance, where the college of nine Anziani headed by a Gonfaloniere di Giustizia sat for two months, and continued to be drawn from an electoral purse made up every two years, in theory, the Anzianate was open to nearly all adult male citizens. 'In practice Lucchese electoral procedures ensured that the office of Anziano was dominated by a relatively small, self-perpetuating oligarchy.'²⁰ In the prosperous Sicilian city of Messina, the principal executive magistracy was the board of six *giurati*, who held office for a year. The office was kept within a restricted circle: 52 families during the period 1406–50, 49 families during the years 1466 to 1515. Many of even these were represented only once. Established *giurati* families dominated the city socially and economically, as well as politically.²¹

Siena was not the only city in which attempts were being made to establish a stronger executive body. In Turin, for example, in August 1490 the main council decided to delegate its own powers for an indefinite period to a few of its leading members. Officially, this was because of the difficulty of assembling the full council at harvest time, but the decision was made after troubles in the city that had resulted in several deaths, and when relations between the citizens and their officials and those of the Duke of Savoy were tense. As there is a gap in the records of the council for some years immediately after this, it is not possible to determine how the nine men elected fulfilled their commission. By the early years of the sixteenth century, however, it is apparent that the full council was assembling only rarely, while most business was being left to a small group of councillors, meeting much more regularly. The 'smaller council', the

²⁰ Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494*, pp. 88–9.

²¹ Carmen Salvo, *Giurati, feudatari, mercanti: l'élite urbana a Messina tra Medio Evo e Età moderna* (Naples, 1995), pp. 54–5, 78–9, 143.

'minor Credenza' had become an established part of the government. Its members were drawn from a much narrower social and economic group than the larger one, nearly all coming from the elite of 'notables'. Like the larger council, the minor Credenza was not supposed to meet except in the presence of a ducal official. But, like the Sixteen of Bologna, they found a way round that restriction: one of the leading members of the oligarchy of Turin, Ribaldino Beccuti, was a judge in the service of the duke from 1499 to 1533, and the smaller council usually met in his presence. In theory, their decisions should have been submitted for the approval of the larger council, the maggior Credenza, but this was not observed with much rigour. Those members of the elite who did not approve of their proceedings were kept on the margins.²²

In other towns, the process of concentration of power in a smaller council could take longer. In Macerata, in the Marche of the Papal States, some of the powers of the General Council had been delegated to the Consiglio di Credenza, which was smaller and easier to assemble. The councillors in the Credenza tried to bring into their own hands all the powers of the civic government and to bring onto the council their own relatives. There were protests in the 1460s about this, but the Consiglio di Credenza managed to outmanoeuvre the General Council, and gradually it became the focus of what would in the sixteenth century form the governing civic nobility of Macerata.²³

For the elite among the patricians of Venice, the institutional focus shifted from the Senate to its steering committee, the College, and particularly to the committee of the Ten.²⁴ Originally instituted in the early fourteenth century to keep watch over threats to the security of the state and government, the Ten had considerably increased its sphere of influence when it acquired an important role in supervising the government of the growing Venetian dominions on the Italian mainland in the fifteenth century. Although it has been argued that the Ten could be seen as an emanation of the Senate, not a

²² Barbero, 'La vita e le strutture politiche nel quadro della bipolarità signore-comune', pp. 551–3.

²³ Paci, 'Le vicende politiche', pp. 181–4.

²⁴ Michael Mallett, 'Venetian elites in the crises of the early sixteenth century', in Stella Fletcher and Christine Shaw (eds.), *The World of Savonarola: Italian Elites and Perceptions of Crisis* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 156–61.

rival,²⁵ there was concern at the time about the creeping increase in its powers, and there were complaints that it ignored the limitations that had been placed upon it. But there were also those, dismayed by the crowds of patricians thronging the Great Council, who saw in the Ten a bastion of good government, by reliable prudent men.²⁶

During the war which began in 1509 with the attack launched against Venice by the League of Cambrai, the authority of the Ten increased. In part this was a consequence of the inevitable need for swift and secret decision-making in time of war, but it was also partly a consequence of expedients that had been adopted to raise much-needed finance for the war. Underage patricians could buy their way into the Great Council for 100 ducats; 300 of them did so during the war. About forty patricians a year bought a seat in the Senate by supplying the Ten with an agreed sum. In 1515, legislation was brought into effect by which patricians could promise the state loans, whose payment was conditional on their being elected to a certain office. Those promising loans did not always obtain the posts they wanted, and outright sale of office was avoided. The opportunities offered by this legislation were eagerly taken up by many patricians whose appetite for government office had been sharpened by the disruption to trade caused by the war. Useful as the money raised by these measures was, they diminished the authority of the Great Council and, even more, of the Senate in favour of the smaller executive committees. The elite within the patriciate, the older, wealthy, experienced men known as the ‘*primi*’ (the ‘first men’ of the state), who were accustomed to circulating among the leading executive bodies, including the Ten and the College, did not trust those who had bought their way into the Great Council and the Senate. The College and Ten became chary of putting important business before the Senate, preferring to deal with it themselves with the help of their advisory commissions, or *zonte*.

‘The increasingly important role played by the Council of Ten in Venetian policy represents a crisis in the conception of equality—that linchpin of the republican regime . . . And what ensured the effective substance and continuity of the Council’s “authority” was

²⁵ Cracco, ‘*Patriziato e oligarchia a Venezia*’, p. 88.

²⁶ Gaetano Cozzi, ‘*Politica, società, istituzioni*’, in Gaetano Cozzi and Michael Knapton, *La repubblica di Venezia nell’Età moderna: dalla guerra di Chioggia al 1517* (Turin, 1986), pp. 111–2.

the fact that it was the ambition of the most prominent men in the Republic to become its members.²⁷ Nevertheless, this was not an attempt by a small group of men to establish a secure privileged position for themselves. There was too rapid a turnover in office for any individuals, however eminent, to take control of any executive body. Indeed, as the powers of the Ten grew, so did the number of officials who had the right to attend its meetings; by 1523, there were seventy-one of them. Between them, the College and the Ten and their respective *zonte* could bring together a substantial proportion of the men who would be considered to be among the *primi* of Venice. This socially homogeneous group became accustomed to dealing with business in this way. Even after the wars ended, and loans for offices were abolished, the Senate did not recover the full measure of authority and influence it had had in the later fifteenth century.²⁸

For the Medicean regime in Florence in the fifteenth century, maintaining a grip on the executive commissions—the Signoria, the Otto di Guardia, the Otto di Pratica, the Dieci di Balia—by manipulating the procedures for election to them, was a constant concern. Rather than trust to the chances of sortition, even when the names placed in the electoral purses had been carefully screened, they preferred to have the members of the major executive bodies hand-picked. Elections *a mano* were the ‘lynchpin of their regime’.²⁹ This is not to say that the executive councils were the locus of their power: there was no attempt to establish a permanent presence for any of the leading members of the Medici family on an executive body in the fifteenth century, like that enjoyed by Giovanni Bentivoglio on the Sixteen of Bologna. Had any such attempt been made, it would probably have aroused fierce opposition from many of the Medici’s own allies.

The most effective instrument to involve ‘the whole oligarchic group’ in making decisions and thus to calm political conflict, Sergio

²⁷ Gaetano Cozzi, ‘Authority and the law in Renaissance Venice’, in J.R. Hale (ed.), *Renaissance Venice* (London, 1973), p. 308.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 296–319; Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, pp. 173–96; Felix Gilbert, ‘Venice in the crisis of the League of Cambrai’, in J.R. Hale (ed.), *Renaissance Venice* (London, 1973), pp. 281–90.

²⁹ Nicolai Rubinstein, ‘Oligarchy and democracy in fifteenth-century Florence’, in Sergio Bertelli, Nicolai Rubinstein and Craig Hugh Smyth (eds), *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations*, 2 vols, I, *Quattrocento* (Florence, 1979), p. 104.

Bertelli argued in an influential article, was the advisory councils summoned by executive bodies to discuss particular issues, like the *pratiche* and *consulte* in Florence and the *Colloqui* of Lucca. Over time, he suggested, such councils tended to increase their own powers and competence, to exercise control over the executive, to take over the role of the other councils, to evolve into something like the Venetian Senate.³⁰ *Pratiche*, *Colloqui*, the *zonte* of Venetian committees, all undoubtedly did provide a forum for the principal men of the city to influence policy even if they were not in executive office at the time. But it is difficult to find an example of such bodies taking over the role of legislative councils. Florentine *pratiche* could only advise, and never had power to enforce the adoption of their decisions. *Colloqui* in Lucca had influence over policy, but it was the General Council that decided it. The *Balie* of Siena, cited by Bertelli as the exemplar of an advisory body taking over the executive, do not fit the bill either.³¹ Even when *Balie* met with the *Concistoro* they were not a purely advisory body, but shared in the *Concistoro*'s executive powers, and when they met alone they were executive commissions, not legislative councils. The *zonte* of the Ten and the College in Venice helped in developing the role of those bodies in the early sixteenth century by participating in their executive powers, not taking them over. The characteristic institution of oligarchic governments in Italy was not an advisory council like a *pratica*, nor a closed executive committee, such as the *Balia* of late fifteenth-century Siena or the Sixteen in Bologna, but legislative councils.

To the Medici, manipulation of the legislative councils to satisfy the aspirations of those members of the Florentine political elite who felt they had a right to be consulted, and to a share in power, while providing a body that could be relied upon to pass the measures the Mediceans wanted, was of crucial importance. The efforts that they invested in creating and fine-tuning councils in the search for

³⁰ Sergio Bertelli, 'Il potere nascosto: i *consilia sapientum*', in *Forme e tecniche del potere nella città (secoli XIV–XVII)* (Università di Perugia, Annali della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, 16 (1979–80)), pp. 11–31.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30; Bertelli (pp. 22–3) misconstrued the significance of the legislation concerning the *Balia maggiore* and the *Balia minore* in Siena in 1457–8. It should be borne in mind that his article was written before recent studies of Sienese institutions in the fifteenth century initiated by the work of Mario Ascheri, had clarified our understanding of them.

the ideal instrument testifies to this. Those who wanted to create an oligarchic regime in Florence—with or without the Medici—also thought of a legislative council, a senate, as the institutional focus they required.

From the return of Cosimo de' Medici from exile in 1434 until the mid-1450s, long-term Balie had been the main institutions used to buttress the Medicean regime. These Balie were not constituted like their Siennese namesakes, and did not play the same role. They were much larger, with hundreds of members, and were legislative rather than executive bodies. Their prime function was controlling the periodic scrutinies to choose those qualified to hold major offices, and dealing with financial legislation—which they did not always send to the statutory councils for approval as they should have done. Such loss of control by those councils over taxation in particular was increasingly resented, and contributed to making the Balie very unpopular: the very name was said to have become odious.³² The councils withdrew the mandate of the Balia appointed in 1452 before the end of its term, and in April 1458 the prestige of the Mediceans suffered when a law was passed making it much more difficult to appoint Balie, and prohibiting the holding of electoral scrutinies by Balie. 'Those who want to live well and under a good civic order greatly dislike such things', the prologue to the legislation declared.³³

This was regarded by the leaders of the Medicean regime as a serious setback, and they were determined to recover lost ground as soon as possible. As their control over elections had been ended in 1455, they had to wait until a favourable Signoria headed by a sympathetic Gonfaloniere di Giustizia was drawn. The Signoria for July and August 1458 turned out to be what they required, and soon after the new board took office, discussions about constitutional reform began in *pratiche*, *ad hoc* consultative assemblies. One proposal was for a new, permanent council with wide powers, whose members would be chosen for six months from a restricted circle. This, a *pratica* agreed, would provide a useful restraint on the citizens ('*frenum esset in civitate*'),³⁴ an opinion which may have been confirmed by

³² Paula Clarke, *The Soderini and the Medici: Power and Patronage in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (Oxford, 1991), p. 78.

³³ 'chi vuole ben vivere et civilmente à grandissimo dispiacere delle decte cose': Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, p. 103, note 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 108–9.

the refusal of the Council of the People to pass the proposed reforms. To members of the elite, it was becoming a question of who should rule, 'whether the leading citizens should be directed by others, or those others should be directed and governed by them, as is just'.³⁵ With some misgivings they decided on the summons of a Parlamento to bypass the ordinary councils. The way for it was cleared by a wave of arrests and exiles, including an order from the Signoria to about 150 citizens to stay at their villas until they were told they could return to the city. The Parlamento, whose participants were surrounded by soldiers and armed citizens, duly agreed to the proposal put before it for a new Balia (the law against Balie had to be specifically suspended for the occasion). Significantly, the Balia was to be for a short term only, until the end of January 1459, while previous Balie had been appointed for five years. One of its main tasks was to set up the new council, supposedly to replace three of the multiplicity of statutory councils that complicated the Florentine constitution,³⁶ but in fact to fulfil the functions of the long-term Balie which the Mediceans recognized they could not now safely propose.³⁷

The new council set up by the Balia was the Hundred, the Cento. It was to have a role in legislation regarding taxation and the hiring of troops, elections to office and general matters of government. Unlike the Balia, it could not legislate without the assent of the Councils of the People and the Commune. Only those known as the *seduti* and *veduti*, that is, those who had sat in, or were known to have been considered eligible for, the Signoria and its permanent advisory colleges, and who were over the age of thirty-five, were to be eligible for the Hundred. But this group included many who were not always ready to support what the Mediceans wanted, and on occasion the Hundred was not as amenable as the leaders of the regime would have wished. In 1472, the Signoria just succeeded in obtaining consent for another short-term Balia, one of whose tasks was to reform the Hundred. The first forty members of that Balia, plus seven others, were to become permanent members of the Hundred, and other measures were passed designed to provide a more stable and controllable membership of the council. It was given

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114, n. 1.

³⁶ The 131, 145 and 200, which had been abolished by the Parlamento.

³⁷ Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, pp. 114–9.

greater authority to act alone, at the expense of the older councils. Although the law reforming the Hundred was supposed to be in force for only five years, it was renewed regularly until the fall of the Medici regime in 1494.³⁸

Not that the reformed Hundred was always obedient to the wishes of the Medici, either. There was considerable opposition in it to the appointment of a Balìa in 1480, perhaps because some councillors felt that the reform the Balìa was to introduce would be to the detriment of their own powers. They would have had just cause for concern, because the Balìa created a new council, the Seventy, which was to replace the Hundred as the major council of the regime. Its powers were wide, over policy, the initiation of legislation, and particularly over elections to office of the major executive magistracies. It was also to be the most oligarchic council in its composition. The first thirty members of the Balìa, selected by the Signoria, were to co-opt forty citizens aged forty or over, who with them would form the council of the Seventy throughout its proposed term of five years. Any vacancies that occurred during that period could be filled by co-option. Members of the Hundred could still create problems in the passage of legislation through the councils, perhaps because of a feeling among some of the political elite 'that the concentration of power had by now gone too far, and that it was not desirable to render it permanent.'³⁹ Nevertheless, the Hundred were given sole responsibility for the renewal of the mandate of the Seventy in 1489, and although they modified some of the Seventy's powers, they did agree to its continuation. They also agreed to the continuation of its membership, which meant that the Seventy was turning into a council whose members *de facto* held their seats permanently.

In the event, both the Hundred and the Seventy were abolished after the exile of the Medici in 1494. With the abolition of the Seventy, 'an institutional place for a small inner elite was gone, and citizens and families who were in the process of acquiring a permanent and hereditary place at the centre of power lost their security of tenure'.⁴⁰ An elite council, with a restricted membership holding

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 128–32, 202–12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226–43; quotation from p. 237.

⁴⁰ Pesman Cooper, 'The Florentine ruling group under the "Governo Popolare"', p. 98.

office for long terms or for life, with extensive powers over the most important affairs of the government and the state: this was the goal of those members of the leading families of Florence who dreamed, in the years after 1494, of the establishment of a 'Senate'.

The Council of Eighty, set up in 1494 at the same time as the Great Council, was neither powerful enough nor exclusive enough to satisfy their aspirations. Primarily it was intended as an advisory body for the Signoria, which was obliged to summon it once a week, and to discuss with it all the matters of importance that were in hand. Members of the Eighty, who had to be at least forty years of age, were elected for a six-month term by the Great Council, and officials in the major magistracies, including the Signoria, sat in it *ex officio*. Until 1498, there was no ban on individuals serving successive terms in the council, as there was for most Florentine offices. According to the contemporary historian Parenti, this was done to make sure that the principal men of Florence should practically always be in the Council to give advice to the Signoria.⁴¹ Although the Eighty did provide a forum for the leading men of the city to have an influence on policy even when they were not holding executive office, it did not become an institutional focus for the elite, perhaps because its members were there to advise and not to make decisions.⁴² After the ban on holding the same office for successive terms was extended to the Eighty in April 1498, it became a still less satisfactory instrument for aspiring oligarchs. Indeed the stated purpose of the new regulation was 'that the offices and dignities of the city, and especially those which are judged to be of some importance and status, should be as widely distributed as possible.'⁴³

During debates about the need for constitutional reform in 1501–2 which resulted in the election of Piero Soderini as Gonfaloniere for life, repeated suggestions were made about the need for a new council. One of the proposals put forward by a group of men from some of the leading families of Florence was for an augmented council of Eighty with increased powers, especially over finance. Those who had served as Gonfaloniere or as an ambassador since the new regime

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91–2.

⁴² Bertelli, "'Uno magistrato per a tempo lungho o uno dogie'", pp. 452–3.

⁴³ Pesman Cooper, 'The Florentine ruling group under the "Governo Popolare"', p. 95.

began in 1494, should be members for life of the new Eighty. The supporters of this proposal envisaged this council, with its strong contingent of 'political experts', as coming to form the centre of the government of the city.⁴⁴ But this was only one scheme among several. Those who favoured the formation of a new, more powerful council with a restricted membership could not agree on its size or its composition, and none of their proposals were put before the Great Council which, it was felt, would have rejected the idea in any case.⁴⁵

There had already been a show of hostility in the Great Council towards an executive magistracy that was seen as a bastion of those who regarded themselves as the rightful political elite of Florence. This was the Dieci di Balìa, which had an important role in managing the external relations of the republic and in military affairs. In May 1499 the Great Council refused to appoint a new board of the Dieci; not until September 1500 was another one appointed, and then only with curtailed powers. Among the proposals for constitutional reform discussed in 1501–2, was the strengthening of the Dieci, which would become a permanent magistracy. Awareness of the need for such a body was sharpened by the pressure exerted on Florence by Cesare Borgia and his commanders in those years. The Dieci played an important role in government during the decade when Piero Soderini was Gonfaloniere, helping provide a measure of continuity in policy.⁴⁶ But this was still not enough to satisfy those who wanted an institutional base for oligarchy.

After Piero Soderini was deposed in September 1512, when the Medici were beginning to return to the city, the aspiring oligarchs pushed through the type of constitutional reform they had hankered after for so long, centred on the creation of a Senate. It picked up the scheme mooted in 1501 for an augmented Council of Eighty,

⁴⁴ Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence* (New York, 1984; 1st edn, 1965), pp. 68–9; Roslyn Pesman Cooper, 'L'elezione di Pier Soderini a gonfaloniere a vita', *Archivio storico italiano*, 125 (1967), pp. 151–2. Gilbert states that all the members of the augmented council would have held office for life, but that does not accord with the account in Parenti, quoted by Pesman Cooper, p. 151, on which his own comments are based.

⁴⁵ Bertelli, "‘Uno magistrato per a tempo lungho o uno dogie’", pp. 455–64; Roslyn Pesman Cooper, 'Pier Soderini: Aspiring prince or civic leader?', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 11 (1978), pp. 76–7.

⁴⁶ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, pp. 61–3, 72; Bertelli, "‘Uno magistrato per a tempo lungho o uno dogie’", pp. 457–64, 492.

with members elected every six months, and additional life members who had served either as Gonfaloniere or ambassador or one of the Dieci di Balìa; the Eighty could also elect another fifty life members.⁴⁷ The powers this council was to have, including the power to appoint all the members of the main executive bodies except the Gonfaloniere (who was to be elected annually by the Great Council), would have made it the heart of the government. If a republic was to be well-governed, the prologue to the legislation setting up this council declared, it had to have a Senate. As Felix Gilbert commented, ‘All the resentment and frustration which the patricians had harboured in the years since 1494 found expression in the succeeding phrase: “This had been considered and recommended by thoughtful citizens frequently in the past, but they were not believed till now when, with great losses for the city and danger to its freedom, experience had proved them to be right.”’⁴⁸

Within days of this legislation being passed on 7 September, their hopes were dashed again. Although Giuliano de’ Medici had agreed to the reform, Medici partisans did not, and pressed for measures to strengthen the position of the Mediceans and protect them against reprisals. They urged the head of the family, Cardinal Giovanni de’ Medici, to call a Parlamento, while the Spanish troops who had brought the Medici back to Florence would still be available to control it. On 16 September, a Parlamento was summoned and agreed to the abolition of the Great Council and to the appointment of a Balìa. This was a small one by fifteenth-century standards, with 55 elected members who co-opted another eleven, but with greater powers and the authority to prolong its own term of office. Neither this Balìa—whose powers were exercised by twelve proctors, among them Giuliano de’ Medici—nor the revived Councils of Seventy and the Hundred, constituted the desired Senate.⁴⁹

Other towns and cities already had the most restricted type of oligarchic council—a closed group of lifetime members, who might have inherited their seats in the council and could be confident that after their deaths their seats would pass by prescription or custom

⁴⁷ Rosemary Devonshire Jones, *Francesco Vettori: Florentine Citizen and Medici Servant* (London, 1972), pp. 66–7.

⁴⁸ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, pp. 77–8.

⁴⁹ Devonshire Jones, *Francesco Vettori*, pp. 68–71, 80–3; J.N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic 1512–1530* (Oxford, 1983), p. 68.

to their heirs or other relatives—in the fifteenth century. Feltre in the Veneto was one such town, where it was decided in 1451 that membership in the council, which numbered no more than seventy, was to be for life and heritable in the direct male line. If the deceased councillor had no heirs, the council was to elect his successor.⁵⁰ In Cingoli, in the Marches of the Papal States, seats in the council became hereditary by custom rather than precept during the second half of the fifteenth century, and this practice was fixed in 1503 by a provision agreed by the legate of the Marches. If there was no son or grandson in the male line over the age of twenty-four and suitable to take over, but the former incumbent had left brothers, then ‘the one who has most time, if he is suitable’ was to have his seat, or one of the others, if he were not. There were further detailed regulations about how the right to the seat should pass from one branch of the family to another; only if no possible candidate could be found in the extended family in the male line could the seat be filled by election.⁵¹ In other towns the councils were on the way to adopting similar practices. Councils like that of Cesena, which from 1467 consisted of 96 life members, with vacancies filled by co-option, naturally tended to find replacements within a restricted circle, usually a son or brother of the deceased.⁵² Council seats also tended to be kept within a restricted group, even where they were not hereditary, if outgoing councillors could choose their own successors. Following a reform in 1473 that made the outgoing General Council of Brescia, rather than the Venetian authorities, responsible for choosing the next one, there was a series of measures designed to limit access to communal offices to those who had held them before, or whose fathers had held office. By the early sixteenth century the General Council of around two hundred citizens, sitting for two years at a time, was drawn from a closed group of about one hundred and fifty families. Developments in Bergamo followed a similar pattern.⁵³

In Lucca, the members of the General Council were given the authority to elect their successors in 1531; until then the General Council had been elected by the Anziani and twelve members of

⁵⁰ Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, pp. 115–6.

⁵¹ Zenobi, *Le “Ben Regolate Città”*, p. 125.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵³ Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, pp. 84–6.

the Council of Thirty-Six chosen by the Anziani.⁵⁴ This change in the method of election was instituted as one of a number of reforms during a period of popular pressure to reduce the influence of the wealthier merchants over the government.⁵⁵ But Lucca was not dominated by a restricted oligarchy; the General Council remained 'the true heart of republican life'.⁵⁶ In the mid-sixteenth century, the Lucchese still described their government as 'popolare', emphasizing the high number of citizens who were involved in public affairs.⁵⁷ Like Venice and Genoa, the other Italian republics that survived as independent states beyond the sixteenth century, Lucca maintained one of the least restricted and oligarchic governments among those of the major cities.

The Venetians would not have described their government as *popolare*, although some might see their Great Council as representing the element of popular government within what was claimed to be a mixed constitution.⁵⁸ If the patriciate was closed, and there was clearly an elite within the patriciate, with members of the families of wealthy *primi* having a better chance of becoming *primi* in their turn, places in the inner circle of government were still not really hereditary. While the influence of the Great Council had been diminished, it retained an important role in elections to office, including elections to the Senate. In Genoa, after 1528 the ranks of those entitled to take part in government were restricted to the men assigned to the twenty-eight government alberghi and their descendants,⁵⁹ and there were limited opportunities for others to join them. Yet membership even of the Great Council of four hundred members was elective and for a limited term, not permanent, and the new constitution was framed so that all the members of the alberghi would have a good chance of serving in the council for a spell and have a chance to hold other offices. There was a strong emphasis on the accountability of the executive to the councils. Only those who had

⁵⁴ Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti*, p. 136; Bratchel, *Lucca 1430-1494*, p. 114.

⁵⁵ Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti*, pp. 117-46.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Casini, 'Note sul linguaggio politico veneziano', pp. 320-2; Gaspare Contarini, *La Repubblica e i magistrati di Venezia* (Venice, 1548), f. XIr: 'questo gran Consiglio . . . ha nella Repu[bb]lica similitudine dello stato popolare'.

⁵⁹ Pacini, *I presupposti politici del "secolo dei genovesi"*, pp. 347-413.

served a two-year term as Doge—and then only if they had passed a final scrutiny of their actions during their tenure of office—were assured a position in the government for life.⁶⁰

Both Siena and Florence struggled in the sixteenth century to keep a republican form of government in which large numbers of citizens had a part; for both the struggle was ultimately unsuccessful. After the death of Pandolfo Petrucci in 1512, his successors were able to maintain some semblance of a *signoria* for a decade, but could only keep this going with the support of the Medici. After Fabio Petrucci was expelled in 1524, contention about how inclusive the government should be continued until the fall of the republic in 1555; the ideal of popular government still had many supporters.⁶¹ Many Florentines wished to retain a form of government in which the main locus of power was a council, although some wanted this to be a large Great Council, others a more restricted ‘Senate’. What they got was government by a Medicean cabal from 1512 to 1527, and, after the fall of what is known as ‘the last Florentine republic’ in 1530, a full-blown Medici *signoria*, soon to be a Medici dukedom. Without the support of other powers, and the fortune of having two Medicean popes, Leo X (1513–21) and Clement VII (1523–34), the Medici would probably have had great difficulty in establishing their rule.⁶²

The fact that legislative and deliberative councils, not executive committees, embodied the *reggimento* in most of the cities of Renaissance Italy was an important obstacle in the way of individuals or families aspiring to establish a position of personal dominance over their fellow citizens. Between Francesco Sforza becoming Duke of Milan in 1450 and Alessandro de’ Medici becoming Duke of Florence in 1532, the only men to become *signori* were papal nephews (or sons), such as Girolamo Riario and Cesare Borgia, who owed their elevation to the position of ruler of one or more cities to their papal relative. No one succeeded in becoming an acknowledged *signore* by his own efforts. Even those men like Pandolfo Petrucci and Giovanni Bentivoglio who came nearest to doing so, had to rely on the support of allies who were unwilling to adopt the role of submissive

⁶⁰ Arturo Pacini, *La Genova di Andrea Doria nell’Impero di Carlo V* (Florence, 1999), pp. 84–5.

⁶¹ See below, pp. 287–98.

⁶² See below, pp. 274–6.

subordinates. Whatever they aspired to be, Giovanni Bentivoglio and Pandolfo Petrucci were in the last analysis only *primi inter pares*; and neither of them would have been able to achieve the measure of dominance they did without the base of a strong executive committee.

Pandolfo's position depended on the support of the Balìa even before he was a member of it. His control of the infantry guard, and the opportunities for financial influence that this gave him, his continuity of tenure on the Nine of Ward, not to mention the financial grants and privileges he was given enabled him to establish a distinct and prominent role for himself in Sienese politics from the late 1480s. That he would have been given such privileges by successive boards of the Concistoro is very unlikely. Once he joined the Balìa himself in 1495, he could set about trying to gain a controlling influence over his colleagues to give him the decisive voice in Sienese affairs. It took him several years to eliminate the challenge to his authority from within the Balìa by Niccolò Borghesi. In the end, Pandolfo proved the better politician, more skilled than his rival at bringing together a group of men who would link their political fortunes to his. The terms of the pact he made as late as 1507 show that even at that date he was dependent on the support of a group of allies, who were ready to acknowledge him as their leader, but not their lord.⁶³

Lorenzo de' Medici never became, or tried to become, *signore* of Florence. 'There is no reason not to believe Lorenzo's assurances of his desire to exercise power in Florence as a private individual'.⁶⁴ Lorenzo had to maintain his pre-eminence by being the hub of a network of patronage stretching far beyond Florence, dispensing an endless stream of recommendations and favours, and by his skill in manipulating republican institutions—he could not afford to bypass them. He could not depend on the unquestioning support of any of the councils and commissions that were fashioned to entrench the Medicean regime in control of Florence. If it ever crossed his mind that life might be easier for him if he were to become *signore* of Florence he, better than anyone, would know how difficult that would

⁶³ See above, pp. 129–30; Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci*, pp. 133–4; Jackson, 'Le regole dell'oligarchia', pp. 209–13.

⁶⁴ Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Dalla repubblica al principato', in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500* (3 vols), I, *Strumenti e veicoli della cultura: relazioni politiche ed economiche* (Florence, 1983), p. 160.

be; the other optimates of Florence would not have stood for it. His son Piero, lacking his father's political skills and subtlety, soon lost the support of the leading men of the regime, who were much more attached to the idea of an aristocratic republic than they were to the Medici.

When they were living under a republican regime which did not provide them with the privileged role in government and in the determination of policy that they felt to be their due, such men might grow nostalgic for the days of Lorenzo de' Medici.⁶⁵ Faced with the apparent ambition of Lorenzo's grandson and namesake to rule Florence like a prince after the family had been restored to the city, even some of the Medici's relatives disliked the idea. Jacopo Salviati and his wife Lucrezia, who was the younger Lorenzo's aunt, wanted him as a companion, a partner in power under their guidance, not as a *signore*.⁶⁶ Francesco Guicciardini spoke for many members of the leading families of Florence when he said that for the Medici openly to rule the city 'in fact and in title' would be 'pernicious' for the Florentines and for the Medici.⁶⁷ Other, principally younger, members of the Florentine aristocracy were, however, encouraging Lorenzo to do just that. His death in 1519 removed the immediate danger of a Medici *signoria*. The only laymen who could be found to represent the main branch of the family in Florence were two boys, Alessandro and Ippolito, neither of them legitimate, neither of them of an age to provide even a nominal head of a faction to press on to a principate.

'Prince' of Genoa was how Pietro Campofregoso referred to the position of Doge in September 1450, when he put himself forward for election to that position after his cousin Lodovico Campofregoso had been deposed. Significantly, Lodovico had been deposed by his own family, who had decided that he was not suited for the role. Pietro claimed to have been nominated by their uncle, Tommaso, who had already been Doge twice and was said not to be anxious

⁶⁵ Felix Gilbert, 'Bernardo Rucellai and the Orti Oricellari: A study on the origin of modern political thought', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 12 (1949), pp. 120–2.

⁶⁶ Roberto Bizzocchi, 'La crisi del "vivere civile" a Firenze nel primo Cinquecento', in *Forme e tecniche del potere nella città (secoli XIV–XVII)* (Università di Perugia, Annali della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, 16 (1979–80)), pp. 90–1.

⁶⁷ Francesco Guicciardini, *Dialogo e discorsi del reggimento di Firenze*, ed. R. Palmarocchi (Bari, 1932), p. 281.

for another try. Following the example of Augustus and Tiberius, Pietro said, Tommaso had designated him from among the Campofregoso as a man who knew how to rule, 'imperare'.⁶⁸ By the mid-fifteenth century, members of the Campofregoso family were evidently beginning to think of themselves as something like a dynasty of *signori* with an hereditary claim for one of them to be doge. Which one that should be, was a matter they felt should be settled among themselves. When Lodovico, Paolo and Spinetta Campofregoso were battling for the dogeship in 1461 to 1464, they were not prepared simply to accept the verdict of the Genoese. This attitude helped dispose the Genoese to accept the rule of Francesco Sforza in 1464, because they were by no means inclined to see the Campofregoso as their natural rulers.

Nor did they see the Doge as their prince. They regarded the position of Doge as that of a 'rector', a governor. He was an elective head of the government, paid a comparatively modest salary, and had little power to take decisions or to act on his own. There was no institution he could use as an instrument to increase his power. The regular executive committee with which he had to work, the Anziani, changed every four months, and he had apparently limited ability to determine who would sit on it.⁶⁹ He was often given a direct role in the election of the numerous *ad hoc* commissions that were appointed to deal with particular matters, but even the Balie elected when Genoa was at war were strictly temporary bodies, whose members were often anxious to be relieved of their responsibilities as soon as they decently could be. They could not be turned into a base from which supporters of the Doge could extend his grip over the government.⁷⁰ A doge who aspired to be more of a prince, as Pietro Campofregoso did, had ultimately to rely on force and intimidation, and if he did that, his days in power were numbered. Even the factional allies of a Doge were not prepared to be treated like his subjects.

⁶⁸ ASG, AS 545, ff. 62v–63v.

⁶⁹ It is not certain how the Anziani were elected: if the procedure followed was in accordance with the rules laid down in 1413, they would have been elected by an *ad hoc* commission which would have itself been elected by another *ad hoc* commission, chosen by the Doge and Anziani. The Doge would sit with the commission that chose the Anziani. (ASG, Manoscritti di Parigi 19, ff. 48v–50r)

⁷⁰ Shaw, 'Principles and practice', pp. 78–80.

In Bologna the Sixteen did provide an instrument by which the leaders of the Bentivoglio family could establish a measure of institutional power, to some degree independent of their faction. Sante Bentivoglio's special position was recognized by the Sixteen in 1452, when they arranged for grants to be made to him from the property of the commune, so that he 'could live honorably according to his status and condition, and that of his house and family'.⁷¹ It was decided he should be given 3,000 lire a year for six years, of which 2,400 a year should be invested in property in the city and territory of Bologna and 600 lire was to go towards his 'necessary expenses'.⁷² As a reward for the 'efforts and heavy expense' sustained by the 'illustrious Bentivoglio family' and especially by Sante 'for the preservation of the present regime', the Sixteen granted Sante for ten years the proceeds from the tax on contracts in Bologna, which he was to distribute among the other members of the family.⁷³ Giovanni Bentivoglio was given an even greater provision than Sante from communal funds in 1471: he was to have 5,000 lire a year, while most of the rest of the Sixteen were to have 200 lire a year.⁷⁴

When Giovanni Bentivoglio was admitted to the Sixteen in 1459, at the age of sixteen, there was no mention of the fact that he was well below the official age limit of thirty.⁷⁵ His primacy within Bologna was recognized by the privilege granted to him by the pope in 1466 of sitting continuously on the Sixteen when the other members were divided into two boards, sitting for alternate terms of six months. There was no possibility, however, that he would be given the kind of papal vicariate that underpinned the *signorie* of families like the Malatesta. There was little doubt that he would have liked to be *signore* of Bologna, and even less doubt that his wife, Ginevra Sforza, daughter of Alessandro Sforza, *signore* of Pesaro, would have liked him to be so. The splendour in which his family lived, and the lordly airs they adopted may have dazzled some Bolognese, but they irritated others. The 'first citizen of Bologna', according to one Bolognese

⁷¹ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 383, Reg. 1, f. 64v.

⁷² *Ibid.*, f. 157r. As he had spent 5,000 lire on his wedding, the Sixteen agreed he should be exempted from the obligation to spend this sum on property.

⁷³ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 384, Reg. 3, f. 81r.

⁷⁴ One was to have 100 lire, five were to have nothing (ASBol, Comune governo, b. 387, Reg. 7, f. 1r, Allegato B).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 125v; Raffaele Belvederi, 'I Bentivoglio e i Malvezzi a Bologna negli anni 1463-1506', *Annali della Facoltà di Magistero dell'Università di Bari*, 6 (1967), p. 47.

chronicler, lived in greater pomp than anyone else in Italy, 'and all those who saw how he lived said he lived more like a king or a prince than the private citizen he was'.⁷⁶ Among those who disliked this degree of ostentation were members of other leading families in the city, notably the Malvezzi, erstwhile allies of the Bentivoglio and one of the families with a member on the Sixteen almost as of right.⁷⁷ Like Pandolfo Petrucci with Niccolo Borghesi in the Balìa of Siena, Giovanni Bentivoglio, particularly with Virgilio Malvezzi (who died in 1481), had to confront a critic and powerful rival in the Sixteen.

Letters written to Giovanni Bentivoglio by the Sixteen when he was absent from the city, indicate that his colleagues were aware that he might be inclined to assume more power than they were content to concede to him. There was some concern that he would make promises to others on their behalf without consulting them. 'We wish, we urge you, and by that grace, love and affection you bear towards us we conjure and command you that on no account should you make any reply to Milan until you have come to us', and heard what they had to say, or he had heard one of their number who would be sent to tell him 'our opinion, intention and will', they wrote in September 1482.⁷⁸ This was not the language of political subordinates. Other letters show that, while it was felt that his opinion on important matters should be sought when he was absent, it was not to be deferred to unquestioningly. News had come from Florence which they felt needed to be discussed by 'all our magistracy', so all members of the Sixteen who were away from the city were being summoned to return; Giovanni could come or not, as he preferred, so long as he let them know his opinion on the matter.⁷⁹

After some Malvezzi had conspired to kill Giovanni Bentivoglio in 1488, it was the Sixteen that passed the sentences against them. One of their own number, Battista Malvezzi—who, the Sixteen

⁷⁶ *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium*, ed. A. Sorbelli, *RR.II.SS.*, XVII, part 1 (Città di Castello, 1906–Bologna, 1940), p. 492.

⁷⁷ For the position, and the ambitions, of the Malvezzi, see Maria Nadia Covini, 'Milano e Bologna dopo il 1455. Scambi militari, condotte e diplomazia', in Mario Del Treppo (ed.), *Condottieri e uomini d'arme nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Naples, 2001), pp. 195–208.

⁷⁸ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 422, f. 217r: Sixteen to Giovanni Bentivoglio, 13 Sept. 1482.

⁷⁹ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 421, Reg. 2, ff. 61v–62r: Sixteen to Giovanni Bentivoglio, 17 Nov. 1478.

declared, had been warned repeatedly to control his turbulent son Giovanni, a leading conspirator, and had failed to do so—was himself expelled from the Sixteen and sent into exile with his family.⁸⁰ In the text of this decree Giovanni Bentivoglio was referred to as ‘Magnifico’, an honorific he was not usually accorded by the chancellors compiling the registers of the Sixteen. In the years that followed the conspiracy, Giovanni and his family became more arrogant and domineering. There was a considerable gulf between the wealthy Giovanni Bentivoglio, accumulating a fortune swelled by money from public funds and the confiscated property of exiles,⁸¹ and some other members of the Sixteen. One of them did not even have a house of his own, so that the Sixteen asked the legate to allow him to have a loan to buy a house, to spare him the dishonour of carting his furniture through the streets when he had to move from one rented property to another.⁸² But the Sixteen were not reduced to be mere obedient instruments of Giovanni’s will. There was resentment when he foisted his illegitimate daughters as brides on families that were represented in the Sixteen.⁸³ His colleagues were conscious of their own dignity and position—a position that they were able to hold on to, when the arrogance of the Bentivoglio finally brought about their expulsion from Bologna by Pope Julius II in 1506. The Forty that Julius elected to be the new supreme civic magistracy in Bologna included the other members of the Sixteen, as well as Malvezzi and Marescotti who had been exiled at the behest of the Bentivoglio.⁸⁴

The celebrated expedition led by Julius II which drove the Bentivoglio from Bologna was also aimed at bringing the Baglioni of Perugia to heel. Gianpaolo Baglioni had the sense formally to submit to the pope before the papal army reached Perugia and his family were allowed to stay.⁸⁵ One reason why the Baglioni may have found it easier to submit to the pope’s authority was that they appear to have had less interest than Giovanni Bentivoglio and his family in seeking to dominate the government of their city. The

⁸⁰ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 388, Reg. 10, ff. 224r–225r.

⁸¹ Belvederi, ‘I Bentivoglio e i Malvezzi a Bologna’, pp. 49–52.

⁸² ASBol, Comune governo 424, ff. 46v–47v: Sixteen to Alvise de’ Capri, 12 Nov. 1491.

⁸³ Belvederi, ‘I Bentivoglio e i Malvezzi a Bologna’, p. 54.

⁸⁴ Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii*, ed. R. Ulin and others, 58 vols (Venice, 1879–1903), VI, cols 499, 501–2.

⁸⁵ Christine Shaw, *Julius II: The Warrior Pope* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 149–50.

Baglioni depended on the strength of their own family and of their faction to maintain their position in the city. Fiefs and vicariates in the territory of Perugia were of more interest to them than a position of supremacy over the civic government. In Perugia 'there were too many other powerful families to allow the Baglioni to dictate terms or create a sympathetic party or bureaucracy to rule for them over the commune'.⁸⁶ They made no attempt to use the office of the Dieci dell' Arbitrio as an institutional base to establish their primacy; they were more interested in winning military *condotte* from other states, and were quite willing to leave Perugia to take up these military commands. It was primarily their external contacts and alliances that could make the Baglioni—or the Bentivoglio, the Petrucci, even the Medici—appear to be something like *signori*.⁸⁷

Just as one major factor frustrating the ambitions of would-be *signori* was that other members, other families, of the political elite were not willing to let them take that much power, so there could also be strong resistance to would-be oligarchs from those who regarded them as their equals, and were not willing to treat them as superiors. Even those who agreed in considering some form of oligarchy as desirable might well not agree on what kind of oligarchy it should be, and how it should govern. Two distinct types of oligarchy would be found in Renaissance Italy, based on antithetic principles. One had some analogies with popular government; the other could be found in popular governments and aristocratic regimes alike.

The first type of oligarchy was characteristic of towns in which an aristocracy had developed and taken over the government, as in the towns of the Veneto studied by Ventura, and those in the Papal States studied by Zenobi.⁸⁸ Participation in these governments (or in such aspects of government as were left in the hands of the local population in subject towns) became confined to a restricted, even closed circle, who came to regard themselves as being socially distinct from those who were excluded. It could be quite a numerous group, numbering several hundred in one of the larger cities.

⁸⁶ Black, 'The Baglioni as tyrants of Perugia', p. 280.

⁸⁷ The important issue of the significance of external influence on the development of civic governments will be discussed later. See below, Chapters 9 and 10.

⁸⁸ Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*; Bandino Giacomo Zenobi, *Ceti e potere nella Marca pontificia. Formazione e organizzazione della piccola nobiltà fra '500 e '700* (Bologna, 1976); *idem*, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*.

Membership tended to become hereditary, so that men were part of it simply because they belonged to certain families.

Even where access to political office was not—or not yet—officially or legally confined to a specific group, families whose members had held office for several generations could begin to regard this as their birthright. Alamanno Rinuccini, for example, asserted his claim to a share of political office in Florence as the ‘hereditary right’ he derived from the many offices held by his ancestors since 1300.⁸⁹ Such a cast of mind would prepare them to see a more oligarchic regime, restricted to those families like their own with a tradition of political office-holding, as desirable, even natural. ‘Should it be allowed that distinguished citizens should be led by others, or should they lead and govern the others, as is just?’, was the sentiment expressed by Franco Sacchetti in a *pratica* in Florence in 1458, a sentiment supported by many, though not all, of those present.⁹⁰ When political office, especially perhaps a seat on a restricted council, became a badge of membership of the oligarchy, men would be jealous of that right, for more than a share in political power would be at stake. Social standing and perhaps economic privilege could also be involved. There might still be a sense that some were more equal than others, a recognition that some members of the oligarchy had a better claim to high executive office or to a seat in an exclusive council, because of their lineage or wealth or personal qualities. In Vicenza, for example, although the Council of One Hundred was ‘largely drawn from families outside the inner circles of power’, they ‘consistently chose members of traditionally powerful families for higher office. In general terms, lesser patricians acquiesced in disparities in rank while patiently working to raise the ranking of their own families.’⁹¹

Nevertheless, within oligarchies, among those who espoused ideals of aristocratic government, there was often a strong element of egalitarianism. This sense of ‘aristocratic equality’ runs through many of the reflections of Florentine politicians, in debate and in their writings. The ‘concept of equality’ with ‘an oligarchical slant’ was ‘a

⁸⁹ Alamanno Rinuccini, ‘Dialogus de libertate’, ed. F. Adorno, *Atti e memorie dell’Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere La Colombaria*, 22 (1957), p. 286.

⁹⁰ Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, p. 114.

⁹¹ Grubb, *Firstborn of Venice*, p. 84.

characteristic trend in Florentine constitutionalist thought'.⁹² Such a sentiment was at the root of the desire of many members of the established families of the Florentine political elite for a permanent *Balia*, a 'senate', to be the heart of Florentine government. Equality among patricians was one of the fundamental principles of the Venetian constitution, and one that was frequently invoked. 'It has always been a characteristic of our state to promote equality, especially in the affairs of the Great Council', a preamble to a proposal concerning elections declared in 1506.⁹³

Equality among the members of the 'unicus ordo' (sole order) established in Genoa in 1528, those Genoese who were to be registered as members of the twenty-eight official *alberghi* and who were to have the exclusive right to hold political office, was explicitly declared as one of the fundamental principles of the new form of government.⁹⁴ Differing interpretations of that principle were at the heart of the controversy between the 'new' and 'old' nobles in Genoa in the sixteenth century. The 'old' nobles, those whose families had been known as nobles before 1528, who were in a minority in the 'unicus ordo', maintained that they should have the half-share of offices that had been reserved to them under the old constitution, harking back to the concept of equality between groups underlying the government of Genoa in the fifteenth century. The 'new' nobles, those whose families had been classified as 'popolari' under the old constitution, maintained that equality meant equality between the individuals who participated in government. 'If we are all equal in the administration of the Republic', all could be assured that they would not be 'excluded from the government', as the author of one of the many interesting political tracts generated by this controversy wrote.⁹⁵ The affinity between the egalitarian ideal of aristocratic or oligarchic government and the ideals of popular government was particularly evident in the case of Genoa, where vocal exponents of the political rights of the *popolo* were also to be found.⁹⁶ But there

⁹² Rubinstein, 'Florentine constitutionalism', p. 462.

⁹³ Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, p. 74.

⁹⁴ Pacini, *La Genova di Andrea Doria*, p. 83.

⁹⁵ Rodolfo Savelli, *La Repubblica oligarchica: legislazione, istituzioni e ceti a Genova nel Cinquecento* (Milan, 1981), p. 155. Savelli discusses these tracts, which deserve to be better known by those interested in sixteenth-century political thought, at length in this book.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, *passim*, especially Chapter 3.

was an important distinction between the popular principle of the right of all the qualified citizens to take their turn in governing and being governed, and the oligarchic principle of the right of a certain group to exercise power over fellow citizens who were permanently excluded from government.

The second type of oligarchy to be found in Renaissance Italy was the small group of men entrenched in control of the government, officially or unofficially. Family background and family influence could be important in securing entry into such a group for an individual, but they were not essential, nor could they guarantee access. Individuals of ability and ambition, even from outside the city, could win a place for themselves. The group that formed around Pandolfo Petrucci was a classic example of this type of oligarchy, including as it did members of prominent Siennese families with a long tradition of political influence, men of lesser political pedigree who had linked their fortunes to those of Pandolfo, and an outsider, Antonio da Venafro, a lawyer from the kingdom of Naples. The group of allies on whom the Medici relied in the fifteenth century to maintain their dominance over Florentine politics was a less clear-cut instance of such an oligarchy. It was much larger and less well-defined than Pandolfo's coterie, but the mix was probably much the same. It included men who would consider themselves the social equals of the Medici, and who had political ideas and ambitions that did not always coincide with those of the Medici; such were the men like Luca Pitti and Dietisalvi Neroni who turned against Piero de' Medici in 1466.⁹⁷ It also included men of lesser social rank and less independent political influence, who could nonetheless be of great service and were treated as confidants. One of the complaints made by those who resented the ascendancy of the Medici and their 'friends' was their reliance on the advice of men from outside the Florentine political elite, such as the chancellor Bartolomeo Scala, who came from Colle Val d'Elsa.⁹⁸ There were no such outsiders among the Sixteen of Bologna, and there was a marked tendency to try to make membership hereditary, but they too can be seen as an example of this kind of restricted oligarchy.

⁹⁷ Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, pp. 155–90.

⁹⁸ Alison Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala 1430–1497, Chancellor of Florence: The Humanist as Bureaucrat* (Princeton, 1979).

The ideology of oligarchy that developed in Renaissance Italy, and which became a major strand of the extensive sixteenth-century literature on the nature of nobility, often stressed the importance of aptitude for rule derived not just from birth into a family with a long political tradition but also from education, and personal qualities.⁹⁹ Such ideas fitted the groups of able and respected men, awarded pre-eminence by their fellow citizens in repeated election to high office and special commissions, like the Sieneese inner circle of the mid-fifteenth century.¹⁰⁰ To some degree the group of patriicians that coalesced around the Ten in Venice in the early sixteenth century also exemplified the kind of men such ideology indicated as particularly well-suited to govern. An ethos of public service, of using one's knowledge and abilities and experience in the service of the community out of a sense of duty (quite apart from the satisfaction of exercising power) was part of this. These ideas did not fit so well cabals or factions trying to manipulate their way into a privileged position, like the men seeking to dominate Sieneese political life in the last decade of the fifteenth century, or the Bentivoglio and their allies in the Sixteen, or the small group of councillors disregarding legal restrictions to arrogate to themselves control of the civic government of Turin at the turn of the century.

Such small oligarchic groups could appear in popular governments as well as in aristocratic regimes. 'In every republic, however broadly-based, in every government, however *popolare*, rarely do more than fifty citizens rise to positions of authority at the same time', commented the Sieneese Claudio Tolomei in 1531.¹⁰¹ Tolomei saw no harm in this, but for many, whether oligarchs or proponents of popular government, for even fifty men to establish themselves in power to the exclusion of others was unacceptable. Concern about the tendency for ambitious men to band together to seek power lay behind the prohibitions and condemnations of 'sette' and 'conventicule', factions and cabals that featured in the statutes and regulations of many towns, and was one reason for the elaboration of regulations governing appointments to office.

It was also one reason for the enormous, continual efforts the Mediceans put into devising and maintaining methods of manipu-

⁹⁹ Claudio Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà in Italia: Secoli XIV–XVIII* (Bari, 1988; 1995).

¹⁰⁰ See above, pp. 9–11.

¹⁰¹ Claudio Tolomei, *Delle lettere* (Venice, 1547), f. 145r.

lating elections and appointments to office in Florence, which are seen as a key to the dominant position they achieved in the fifteenth century.¹⁰² If they were to ensure that offices were filled by their friends and sympathisers, rather than by their opponents or by those who disapproved of the domination of political life by one family and their allies, they had to find ways to circumvent long-established methods of selecting those considered suitable for office and of appointment to office, methods that had been designed to keep Florentine government out of the grip of factions. But the Florentine obsession with electoral controls was the result of social as well as political concerns. Holding major political office had become so important to the social status of individuals and of their families that more names were drawn out of the electoral purses than were needed to fill the offices, so that those whose names had been shown to be in the bags—the *veduti*—were known to have qualified for office, even if they would not have the opportunity at that time to be among those who actually held office, the *seduti*. The enhanced social status that went with the political status of the *seduti* and *veduti* for the *Tre Maggiori*, the Signoria and its advisory boards of the Twelve Good Men and Sixteen Gonfalonieri, was analogous to that of the *riseduti* of Siena. The *seduti* and *veduti* ‘emerged as a privileged group’. Not only did they receive ‘privileged treatment in the scrutinies’, so did those ‘whose fathers, grandfathers or uncles had been *veduti*’; they were known as the *beneficiati*. ‘It was probably social status which was uppermost in the minds of those who so eagerly sought the honour of being *veduto* Gonfaloniere, for themselves or their relatives. By trying to satisfy patrician ambitions in this way, Lorenzo could hope to reconcile the demands of an increasingly exclusive system of government, in which political power was concentrated in a small group of citizens under his leadership, with the oligarchical tradition in Florentine politics’.¹⁰³

In Florence the link between a family’s social status and the history of office-holding of its members was long-established: hence the Florentine practice of maintaining family records of the offices held by successive generations, the *prioriste*. Under the Medici regime, being recognized as a member of the *reggimento* became less a sign

¹⁰² This is the major theme of Nicolai Rubinstein’s *The Government of Florence*.

¹⁰³ Rubinstein, ‘Oligarchy and democracy’, pp. 103, 106.

of sharing in political power, and more of belonging to a social group distinguished by its participation in political and administrative office.¹⁰⁴ Resentment at exclusion from political power and from participation in decision-making among those who were sidelined by the Medici would be compounded by resentment at the threat to the social status of a man and his family that this implied.

Office-holding was the focal point of Florentine political life, not just because high political office was crucial to the social prestige of leading families (except for magnates),¹⁰⁵ but because salaried offices, particularly those in Florentine subject territory, could provide a valuable boost to a man's income. Seeking office for financial benefit, particularly if efforts were made to hold a succession of offices, was regarded as making a business out of government—'fare bottega dello stato' was the phrase used. In the early fifteenth century this practice was considered reprehensible by many.¹⁰⁶ At the end of the century, there were still those who thought it an abuse. It would be of great benefit to Florence, argued Domenico Cecchi, if the numbers of names placed in the electoral purses for government offices were much increased, because then those who have no trade and have 'facto bottega dello stato' would be discouraged by the greater competition and would turn to more productive businesses, training their sons to take up useful occupations.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it was becoming more generally accepted as natural that men should look to the profit to be derived from office; it was seen as sharing in the benefits as well as the burdens and honours of office.¹⁰⁸ It was only right that in Florence, where taxes were high, citizens should have the chance to be helped by the emoluments of office, argued one of the personages in Guicciardini's *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze*.¹⁰⁹ So large did this consideration come to loom for Francesco Vettori, that 'by the time of the last Florentine Republic he had come to the conclusion that since distribution of office was the clue to stability, no

¹⁰⁴ Riccardo Fubini, 'Dalla rappresentanza sociale alla rappresentanza politica: alcune osservazioni sull'evoluzione politico-costituzionale di Firenze nel Rinascimento', *Rivista storica italiana*, 102 (1990), p. 299.

¹⁰⁵ See above, pp. 152–4.

¹⁰⁶ Varotti, *Gloria e ambizione politica*, pp. 8–9.

¹⁰⁷ Mazzone, "El buon governo", p. 187.

¹⁰⁸ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ Francesco Guicciardini, *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze*, ed. Gian Mario Anselmi and Carlo Varotti (Turin, 1994), pp. 52–3.

republican form of government could hope to survive in Florence unless either the city's income doubled or the number of citizens was cut by half.¹¹⁰

Making a business out of public office was coming to be seen as natural in another sense—that government was a complex matter that required an appropriate education and experience of affairs for those who held high office. Government was therefore best left to those who dedicated most or all of their time to it, and were not distracted by the cares of making a living. A distinction between those who were technically eligible to hold high office and those who were fitted to exercise power had been an aspect of political thinking in Florence by the beginning of the fifteenth century. Deference to the political elite's claim to exercise power found theoretical justification in the ideal of the obedient citizen, devoid of political ambition, who took his turn to govern when called on to do so, but did not press for office.¹¹¹ In the early sixteenth century, after the “republican” regime of 1494–1512, and even more after that of 1527–30, Florentine aristocrats became still more firmly convinced that they had the right to govern and less inclined to believe that the *popolo* had any right to a share in government.¹¹² Few might have said openly, as Girolamo degli Albizzi was accused of doing in March 1528, ‘that he did not wish to be managed by these filthy plebs, ruffians and dirty commoners who at present govern the city, and that one did not expect the city to be governed by nobodies like those who govern it today . . . we gentlemen and nobles expect to govern and not these scum.’¹¹³ But Luigi Alamanni would have spoken for many when he drew a distinction between those who, because they ‘were held in higher esteem, had more brains and were more noble’ claimed a prerogative to govern, and those who wanted honours and offices but did not aspire to a share in power. Those who did claim the right to govern would prefer a regime in which they had more authority and reputation to one in which they were mixed up with just anybody.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Devonshire Jones, *Francesco Vettori*, p. 241.

¹¹¹ Najemy, ‘Civic humanism and Florentine politics’, pp. 89–91.

¹¹² See Rudolf von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato: Storia e coscienza politica* (Turin, 1970, 1995), *passim*.

¹¹³ Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic*, p. 238.

¹¹⁴ ‘Discorso di Lodovico Alamanni sopra il fermare lo stato di Firenze nella devozione de’ Medici’, in von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, p. 382.

With such attitudes prevalent among Florentine aristocrats, the ideological foundations for the aristocracy to turn into a closed oligarchy, which might then become a legally distinct civic nobility, had been laid. Many of them would probably have been quite content with that outcome, and might well have preferred it to the regime that in fact became established in Florence, the Medici dukedom. Once they had accepted that there was no hope of establishing an aristocratic regime with the support of prosperous *popolari* who would be given some offices but little effective power, as they had hoped to achieve in 1494, 1512 and 1527, many Florentine aristocrats reconciled themselves to the notion of a Medici *signoria*, imagining that the duke would have to turn to them for advice and support. But these hopes were destined to disappointment as well, and they achieved neither the privileged status nor the access to power that they had thought was theirs by right.¹¹⁵

Venice was the archetype of the state in which political office was reserved for a closed nobility. There, 'more than anything else, office-seeking dominated and shaped . . . political life'.¹¹⁶ Among Venetian patricians, there was a general sentiment that all should have access to some office, and it was recognized that for many poor patricians the income from spells of holding office was a vital part of the family finances. A law passed in 1520 by the Senate, noting that 'it was in the interests of justice and equity to enable everyone to participate in offices and government posts', provided that for all offices with a salary attached, there had to be an interval before the same man could hold such an office for another term.¹¹⁷ A proposal in 1492 to provide pensions for 'poor gentlemen' without offices by a levy on the salaries of high officials reflected an assumption that patricians had a right to expect the state, if not quite to provide them with a living, at least to help them to live, but was considered to be so politically provocative that it was not allowed to go before the Great Council and those who proposed it were exiled.¹¹⁸ The more important offices were in practice reserved for wealthier patricians, from powerful families. Within the patriciate, office-holding was a crucial factor in a man's social standing. High office was cov-

¹¹⁵ von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, pp. 179–211, 280–9.

¹¹⁶ Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, p. 197.

¹¹⁷ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XXVIII, col. 366.

¹¹⁸ Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, pp. 76–7.

eted, but election to it was reserved for those with sufficient wealth to sustain its dignity, and sufficient reputation among their fellow patricians to be considered worthy to hold it.

By contrast, in Genoa political office was not restricted to a designated group of citizens, nor was it of fundamental importance to a man's social position. Nor was high office particularly sought after—many wealthy Genoese made no attempt to make a political career for themselves. The contrast between Genoa and other cities was highlighted in a document of 1506 proposing reforms to the government. Genoa's way of life was different from that of anywhere else, because her citizens had no alternative to making their living by trade, the author said. Consequently, it was difficult to convince citizens they should put aside their private business to dedicate themselves to the tasks of public administration. The solution proposed was that those appointed to office should stay in their posts for up to six years, be aged at least 45, and be paid a decent salary.¹¹⁹ With the fundamental reform of the structure of government in 1528, and the restriction of political office to a designated group, there was a change in Genoese attitudes. The regulations for election to the Council of Four Hundred, from among whose members all appointments to offices were to be made, were explicitly intended to provide a chance for all members of the new government *alberghi* to hold office from time to time. One of the main proposals made in 1506 was put into practice, with the payment of salaries to high officials 'as it is just that those who are attending to the common good should be given a subvention from public funds.' Those filling the highest offices under the Doge, those of Governors and Procurators, were not to be permitted to exercise any trade but that of a merchant during their term of office, to preserve the dignity of their magistracy.¹²⁰

In Siena, the distribution of salaried offices was a central aspect of political life, and of consequence for the financial planning of many citizens. There was much resentment when the system of distribution of offices by lot, according to a *rota* of *terzi* and *monti*, was over-ridden in the late 1480s and 1490s by grants of office as rewards, or as compensation for losses suffered during exile or as a

¹¹⁹ Pacini, 'La tirannia delle fazioni', pp. 104–5.

¹²⁰ Pacini, *La Genova di Andrea Doria*, pp. 83, 87, 89.

result of political conflict, and even more controversially by sales of office. Control over the distribution of office—including the allotment of offices to themselves—was an important element of the strategy of the oligarchical group that emerged during that period to establish and maintain themselves in power. What happened in the sixteenth century has yet to be studied although it is more than likely that the Petrucci kept a firm grip on the distribution of office during the years of their dominance. This was certainly the complaint made in a long catalogue of the abuses of the Petrucci prepared by the Sienese for an envoy of Charles V, probably in 1526, after the Petrucci had been expelled. ‘As all the magistracies of the city and contado had been made venal . . . of necessity they came into the hands of the worst and most avaricious men of this city, for unsuitably long periods.’ Partly because they had been ‘deprived of the podestarie, of [the command of] the fortresses and of the other offices and public emoluments’, a great many citizens had become so poor that they had had to leave the city and eke out a miserable existence in the country.¹²¹

Office-holding was not a controversial matter in Lucca, at least in the fifteenth century. All citizens had some trade or profession, and there was no stable peak to a political career, that might encourage men to devote themselves to politics as a full-time occupation. The ethos of Luccchese political life was hostile to the emergence of individuals who might stand out from their fellows. In the early sixteenth century, there was growing discontent among prosperous artisans and men of good but not prominent family who wanted ‘to participate in the government of the republic and to be called to offices of honour like the others’,¹²² and who felt that a restricted group of wealthier merchants were contriving to have more than their share. Their grievances lent an additional dimension to the discontent of the weavers which gave rise to the movement of the ‘Straccioni’ in 1531–2. The Straccioni labelled the wealthy merchants ‘nobles’ to indicate that they were forming an aristocracy that was undermining an avowedly popular government. At least some of the members of the greater families thought of themselves as noble by

¹²¹ Archivo General de Simancas, Estado, Legado 1454, 45; published as appendix to Christine Shaw, ‘Popular government and the Petrucci’, in Mario Ascheri and Fabrizio Nevola (eds.), *Siena nel Rinascimento: l'ultimo secolo della repubblica* (Siena, 2006).

¹²² Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti*, p. 128.

that date, but it was only in the second half of the sixteenth century that the use of that term became general in Lucca.¹²³

The connection between two major aspects of political and social life in many towns and cities in Renaissance Italy—the development of an oligarchy with a monopoly on or privileged access to public office, and the development of a recognised and legally distinct civic nobility—is more complex and varied than might be assumed when that connection seems so obvious. In Padua, for example, the aristocracy that formed was based on membership of the civic councils. The ‘citizens’ (the ‘cives’) who were eligible to the councils emulated the way of life of the old nobility, from whom they remained distinct, although by the early sixteenth century they were being referred to as ‘noble citizens’ (‘nobiles cives’). It was as this process developed, as the aristocracy took shape, that the competition for offices became intense, and ‘office acquired growing importance as a source of economic gain and of social prestige’.¹²⁴ In Tivoli the oligarchy was not defined by membership of a council, but nevertheless by the mid fifteenth century an aristocracy was forming in which minor noble families merged with those of leading *popolari*. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century these ‘nobiles cives’ were beginning to monopolize civic offices, members of the ‘new’ families most prominent among them, although many members of leading families looked to careers outside Tivoli, especially in the service of the papal government, to enhance their fortunes and the standing of their family.¹²⁵

Concern to restrict access to office was the spur to a crucial stage in the delimitation of the aristocracy of Brescia. The *serrata* of 1488, the ‘closing’ of the council in Brescia, confining membership in it to members of families who had had the status of citizens before 1438, was justified on the grounds that it was not right that those who were not originally from Brescia should have the same privileges as those who were ‘old’ citizens, sharing their offices and honours, and ‘taking the bread from the hands of their sons’ (a phrase that reveals the financial importance of office).¹²⁶ By contrast, in Perugia the

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹²⁴ Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, pp. 67–71; quotation, p. 69.

¹²⁵ Sandro Carocci, *Tivoli nel Basso Medioevo. Società cittadina ed economia agraria* (Rome, 1988), pp. 72–86.

¹²⁶ Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, pp. 191, 235.

accepted list of noble families in the sixteenth century came to be based on a list compiled in 1494 of those families declared eligible for a specific office, that of captains of the *contado*, but there was no official legal definition, and no *serrata*. The nobles of Perugia were sufficiently confident of their status and pre-eminence not to feel the need for them to be protected by formal definitions and exclusions, and to share office with *popolari* without fear of compromising their own standing.¹²⁷

The explanation most generally advanced for why men should turn to the pursuit of office in urban government, and rely increasingly on the income and other financial benefits to be gained from it, is that they did so because of economic difficulties and reduced opportunities. That men would look to office as a source of income at times of economic difficulties is an explanation that occurred to their contemporaries too—like Piero Parenti, accounting for why Florentines at the end of the fifteenth century were ‘much more interested than usual in offices, especially those from which some profit could be derived.’¹²⁸ Even if they did not carry a salary, as was the case with many of the higher political offices, they could still bring financial advantages: opportunities to shift the burden of taxation onto others, to exploit or misappropriate public property, to make loans to the government on favourable terms. The Siennese oligarchy of the late fifteenth century were certainly aware of the financial advantages membership of the *Balia* could bring, although it did not include a salary.

This economic explanation could account for why men might look to make a career in public office, and why they might want to restrict the holding of public office to a defined group. But it is not enough to explain why, in so many towns and cities of Italy (and elsewhere in Europe), urban political elites came to think of themselves as socially superior, as having a special aptitude, if not the right, to rule over fellow citizens with whom they had traditionally shared the government of their communities, and often arrived at defining themselves as a nobility. This is a complex subject, and not an easy one to tackle. Even when dealing with a single community, it

¹²⁷ Irace, *La nobiltà bifronte*, pp. 17–27.

¹²⁸ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, p. 15; translation from Schnitzer, *Savonarola nach den Aufzeichnungen des Florentiners: Piero Parenti*, p. 291.

is easier to trace the outward signs of attempts to achieve and define noble status—the use of honorific titles, the condemnation of some trades and professions as not befitting a noble—than to find direct evidence for shifts in social attitudes and ways of thinking over several generations. James Grubb's comments on Vicenza, that the 'transformation of patriciate into nobility was effected quietly', and 'attracted surprisingly little notice', could probably be echoed for many a town and city in Renaissance Italy (including those where the local elite could hardly be described as a patriciate).¹²⁹

Some of the factors influencing this critical change in the mentality of the urban political elites are nonetheless evident. One was referred to earlier: as some men could look back over several generations of ancestors holding political office in their community, their awareness of the family tradition of holding high office could become a sense of an hereditary right to do so. A family's tradition of holding political office was a source of prestige in the community. It was part of the self-image, and the social image, of a family—and became one of the crucial defining characteristics of most civic nobilities. Those who believed their birth gave them a right to hold high office, a right they also believed many of their fellow citizens did not share, were on the way to thinking of themselves and their families as a breed apart.

Education can be brought into the equation, with the diffusion of classical humanist ideas on the values of public life. Whether as motive or justification for the pursuit of political office, the idea of the honourable nature of political life, of its dignity as a calling, would be easy to absorb from even a second or third hand acquaintance with the works of Cicero or Aristotle. Such ideas could be picked up from the sentences and exempla used in teaching the basics of Latin in text-books and schools throughout Italy. A university education could itself confer nobility on an individual, if not on his heirs. A doctorate was widely recognized—in practice as well as in the treatises of learned men—as conferring a claim to nobility on its holder, and adding lustre to civic nobility. Those holding doctorates were often put at the head of lists of civic officials, together with those holding civic knighthoods. Doctorates in law—which meant their holders would be learned in Roman law—brought particular

¹²⁹ Grubb, *Firstborn of Venice*, p. 93.

respect, more than doctorates in medicine. The formal pre-eminence accorded to those learned in the law was the other side of the coin from the disdain shown for the 'unlettered', who were prominent among those whom oligarchs argued were unfit to participate in political life.

To the economic, social and intellectual factors working together to produce an oligarchic cast of mind among the political elites of Renaissance Italy, could be added the lure of imitation. Italian civic elites were interested in how other towns and cities were governed. Members of these elites would have had occasion to spend time in other towns, and ties of business relations, friendship and marriage created intricate networks of news and information. As with the Sienese who looked to the model of the Sixteen of Bologna, awareness of developments in other cities might stimulate ambition. Those who observed their neighbours developing claims to be regarded as a civic nobility might well feel impelled to do the same, if they did not want to find themselves being looked down on. Awareness of the prejudices about nobility of the French and Spanish soldiers and officials who became so familiar a part of Italian political and social life from the early sixteenth century, would have reinforced this tendency. When the most poverty-stricken Spanish *hidalgo*, forced to earn his bread as an infantryman in the army of the king, was still ready to look down on mere Italian commoners, however wealthy or educated or respected in their own cities, assertion of the 'nobility' of the civic elites was a way of asserting a right to being treated with greater respect by those who now held sway over so much of Italy, and whose influence was felt throughout Italy.

But how much direct pressure did the French and Spanish bring to bear to encourage and reinforce the development of oligarchic governments? And what was the attitude of Italian governments before the era of the Italian wars to popular governments and oligarchies in their subject towns and cities? How and to what extent external influences contributed to the development of oligarchical government will be the subject of the next chapters.

CHAPTER NINE

STRIKING A BALANCE

‘It does not befit our dignity that we should permit those who are under our rule to adopt different laws and a different way of life from ours’, Doge Pietro Campofregoso and the Anziani of Genoa declared in December 1455.¹ It would indeed seem logical that governments would promote, if not enforce, institutions and regimes of civic government in their subject towns and cities with which they could feel at ease. But would that mean that republican regimes would necessarily want their subject towns to have the same form of civic government as the capital city did? Or would they, and princes, prefer to deal with oligarchies in their subject towns, because this made it easier to control them?

The Doge and Anziani were commenting on the situation in the subject town of Albenga where the *popolari* were determined to retain the organization, the ‘union’, that the Doge himself had encouraged them to form. Now he wanted them to abandon it, because he was losing his own support among the *artefici* of Genoa and striving to gain the support of the nobles.² A year earlier, Pietro Campofregoso would not have put his name to instructions criticizing the government of Albenga as showing contempt for ‘those who are called nobles’, with the administration in the hands of ‘inferior men, who lacked the intelligence, the skills and the strength to govern’.³ Nor would he have said that the people of Albenga should be made to understand that their old customs and former laws and magistracies sufficed to enable them to live well.⁴ A few months later, his attitude had changed again, and he sent his brother Tommasino to Albenga to stiffen the resistance of the union to the hostility of the noble

¹ ASG, AS 3041: instructions to commissioners going to the Western Riviera, 26 Dec. 1456(5).

² See above, pp. 156–7, 162.

³ ‘Inferiores viros . . . qui nec ingenio nec artibus nec viribus gubernandis rebus sufficient’.

⁴ See note 1.

Doria clan.⁵ Intervention by the Genoese in the affairs of their subject communities was generally based in this way on the logic of factional rivalry, rather than concern that their forms of government should be consonant with those of Genoa. Powerful noble families, and the factions that divided the Riviere and the mountains and valleys beyond, had much greater influence on Genoese subject towns than the city government of Genoa did.

One government that has been seen as trying to mould the political institutions and political society of its subject towns to match its own is that of Venice. In his ground-breaking study of the Veneto, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società veneta del Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, Angelo Ventura argued that the Venetians consciously wanted to make the laws and the institutions of their subject towns and cities conform to the principles of their own government. 'Political calculation and innate noble mentality came together to favour, wherever Venetian domination extended, the aristocratic transformation of the civic councils.'⁶ Not all the instances of constitutional change Ventura discussed in this book bear out this assertion—he himself, for example, noted the 'antioligarchic' sense of the reform of the Council of Padua in 1446, when the Senate ordered that the number of members should be increased from sixty to a hundred.⁷ In later work he modified his views, arguing that Venetian influence was of 'secondary importance' to the 'autonomous process of aristocratization', but still maintaining that 'Venice continued to intervene in the evolution' of civic government 'favouring aristocratic closure and the natural tendency to imitate . . . the administration and judicial institutions of the *Dominante*.' He also continued to stress the subordination of local patriciates, the 'irremediable sharp decline in social and political rank' that they suffered.⁸

Other scholars have seen the relations between the Venetians and their subjects in a different light, and have called into question

⁵ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 411: Ottaviano Vivaldi? to Cicco Simonetta, 22 Mar. 1456, Savona.

⁶ Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, p. 47.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁸ Angelo Ventura, 'Il Dominio di Venezia nel Quattrocento', in *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations I: Quattrocento* (I Tatti Conferences, 1976–77) (Florence, 1979), pp. 173–4, 184. See Michael Knapton, "'Nobiltà e popolo" e un trentennio di storiografia veneta', *Nuova rivista storica*, 82 (1998), pp. 167–92, for the influence of Ventura's work, and some of the criticisms that have been made of it.

whether the Venetians had any intention of trying to bring the political systems of subject cities into closer conformity with their own. Venetians insisted on explicit recognition of their superiority in the *capitoli*, the written terms defining their relations with their subject cities, and on their right to alter local statutes, which local elites were anxious to preserve. In practice, they tended to leave the statutes alone, limiting their intervention to the approval (or disapproval) of revisions undertaken by local lawyers.⁹ Venetian rectors were ordered to observe the statutes and procedures of the cities they were governing, even if this was against the interests of Venice. No acts of homage were imposed on Venetian subject communities (as they were on Florentine ones) and the symbols and emblems of the cities were left alone.¹⁰ When Venice intervened in local political arrangements, the aim was to prevent conflict, and to try to enhance co-operation with local elites. This might mean enlarging councils, rather than encouraging the restriction of political elites. In December 1455, the Senate ordered changes to revisions of the statutes of Verona that had recently been made by the citizens, so as to increase the numbers of those taking part in elections to the council, 'because there is no doubt that when a greater number is involved, such an election is conducted with greater solemnity and order'.¹¹ An attempt at Belluno to restrict membership of the council there to those who could prove their descent from three generations of council members was annulled by the Venetian Senate, after initially being approved, on the grounds that the reform was contrary to the ancient customs of the city and to the common law, and because it was just to succour the oppressed and to extirpate divisions and disputes among the citizens.¹² The increase of the number of councillors at Padua in 1446 was also justified as a means of preventing trouble, as well as allowing a greater number of citizens to share in the honour of council membership.¹³

⁹ Alfredo Viggiano, *Governanti e governati. Legittimità del potere ed esercizio dell'autorità sovrana nello stato veneto della prima età moderna* (Treviso, 1993), pp. 26–8.

¹⁰ John Law, 'The Venetian mainland state in the fifteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 2 (1992), pp. 162–72.

¹¹ John Law, 'Venice and the "Closing" of the Veronese constitution in 1405', *Studi Veneziani*, new ser., 1 (1977), p. 95.

¹² Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, p. 115.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 65; Viggiano, *Governanti e governati*, p. 189.

Preserving peace and good order in their dominions was the Venetians' principal concern. If that meant allowing or approving a restriction in the numbers of citizens of their subject cities who could hold political office, they would do that. If it meant acting to prevent discontent from those who resented attempts to exclude them, then the Venetians would intervene, as they did at Padua and Belluno. But they were always responding to developments at local level, not seeking to shape the local political elites and institutions in their own image. 'The initiative for closure was local in every case.'¹⁴

The Tuscan republics did not have a deliberate policy of shaping the political systems of their subject communities in their own image, either. In Lucchese territory, few communities could aspire to be thought of as a town, and one of those that Lucca had had, Pietrasanta, was lost to Genoa in 1436. The Lucchese state was essentially composed of rural communities, some firmly under the control of Lucca, some, especially in the mountains, 'distinctive and self-reliant', with 'perceptions of central government . . . shaped by the latter's distance and by its uncertain attentions'.¹⁵ Lucchese relations with their subjects centred on the issues of taxation, economic regulations, public order and defence.¹⁶ The concerns of the Sienese in their territory were much the same, in relation to the towns such as Orbetello and Pienza, as well as the smaller communities. Changes to the composition or functioning of the local councils were due to the particular circumstances of each place, rather than any attempt by the Sienese to bring them into line with their own government, or to try to make them more like each other.¹⁷ Even if the Sienese had wanted to do that, the frequent and sometimes controversial changes in their own city's political system would have made this difficult to accomplish.

The Florentines had several sizeable towns and cities under their rule, including Pisa, Arezzo, Pistoia and Volterra. They had tried in 1415 to issue statutes that would be binding on their subject towns as well as on the city of Florence, but the attempt had failed. Although they claimed the right, as did Venice, and as was generally accepted by jurists, to check and confirm the statutes of their subject com-

¹⁴ Grubb, *Firstborn of Venice*, p. 85.

¹⁵ Bratchel, *Lucca 1430-1494*, pp. 242-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-55.

¹⁷ Dani, *I comuni dello Stato di Siena*, pp. 130, 133-4.

munities, those communities, large and small, retained the right to live by their own statutes and to make new ones. Despite the centralizing policies of Duke Cosimo I, they continued to exercise that right when their superior was no longer the republic of Florence but a Medici duke.¹⁸ Florence left the subject cities and communes to live under their own laws, the extent of local autonomy as defined within local statutes remaining considerable, and encompassing the determination of political and administrative affairs, the running of charitable institutions, the management of communal goods and the regulation of communal ritual.¹⁹

Even so, Florentine rule was not readily accepted by many of their subjects, particularly by the civic elites who resented this political submission to an ancient rival. Florentine insistence on all offices in their territorial administration, even minor ones, being held by Florentine citizens, also aroused resentment. There was a real possibility, as the Florentines were aware, that the subject towns would rebel if the opportunity arose, as Pisa, Volterra, Montepulciano and Arezzo all did. At the heart of these rebellions were the local elites impatient of Florentine dominion. Recent scholarship on the Florentine state in the fifteenth century has stressed the importance of patronage networks in binding the elites of subject towns to individual Florentines, especially the Medici family. Local communities and individuals would approach Florentines who they hoped could mediate or intercede for them; in return, the communities would be asked to bestow the salaried offices at their disposal that were to be filled by 'outsiders', like that of local chancellor, on friends of influential Florentines. Those friends could be from another of Florence's subject towns, and it has been argued that local notables saw opportunities for social promotion in forming links with powerful figures at the centre, who could help them to make a career for themselves in public administration. Valuable as the links thus formed between individual members of local elites and of the Florentine elite might be in reconciling them to the restrictions Florence placed on the

¹⁸ Jane Black, 'Constitutional ambitions, legal realities and the Florentine state', in William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi, *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 48–64; Elena Fasano Guarini, *Lo Stato Mediceo di Cosimo I* (Florence, 1973), pp. 54–5.

¹⁹ Patrizia Salvadori, 'Florentines and the communities of the territorial state', in William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi, *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 210.

political life of their communities, too frequent or too insistent interventions from the centre could irritate the local authorities, who might resist or refuse them.²⁰ Links of clientage and patronage were not, however, necessarily separate from or opposed to official institutional links. Florentine rectors and vicars enhanced their authority and their reputation not by provoking conflicts but by resolving them, by gaining the consent and co-operation of the local elites and acting as a channel of communication between the local community and the Florentine government, ready to make known local needs as well as enforcing Florentine orders.²¹

Officials sent to represent the duke in the towns and cities of the duchy of Milan also needed the co-operation of local elites if they were to fulfil their duties. Without the agreement of the principal citizens 'it was not possible to govern'.²² If they were at odds with an official, they might remind him that they too had connections at court, perhaps with the duke himself, and for his part the duke might easily side with the citizens against his own men. Some ducal officials, struggling to control cities dominated by well-entrenched factions, 'squadre', who divided up civic government among themselves and favoured keeping councils' membership open to their followers from outside the social and economic elite, advocated oligarchic reforms. Fabrizio Zucchi, for example, proposed in 1484 that the council in Parma should be turned into a council of noblemen, holding office for life, 'filled with prudent, grave and sensible men'.²³ Twenty years earlier, an anonymous proposal for the reform of the council of Parma suggested a reduction in the number of councillors from 100 to 77, and that they should be selected by a ducal official, because in that way 'the most notable and worthy citizens' would be chosen, who 'as gentlemen would not be ready to do a disservice to others, nor be partial as workmen and other *popolari* would be, who have

²⁰ Patrizia Salvadori, 'Lorenzo dei Medici e le comunità soggette tra pressioni e resistenze', in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: politica, economia, cultura, arte*, 3 vols (Pisa, 1996), III, pp. 902–4.

²¹ Andrea Zorzi, 'Gli ufficiali territoriali dello Stato fiorentino (secc. XIV–XV)', in *Gli ufficiali negli Stati italiani del Quattrocento* (Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Ser. 4, Quaderni I) (Pisa, 1997), pp. 196–7.

²² Giorgio Chittolini, 'Governo ducale e poteri locali', in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli Stati italiani ed europei (1450–1535)* (Milan, 1982), p. 34.

²³ Arcangeli, 'Aggregazioni fazionarie', p. 390.

no compunction about doing what should not be done, provided they are persuaded to do it by their leaders or principals.²⁴

The dukes could, however, refuse to agree that civic councils in the towns of the duchy should become more oligarchic, or that hereditary membership could be guaranteed. Sometimes they intervened to promote or enforce the admission of new—if suitably qualified—men to the councils. But direct ducal intervention in the running of the city councils was rare. In general the towns kept their own laws, and their own forms of government. An exception to this rule was the major city of the duchy, Milan itself. Milan lacked an effective independent civic government, and the dukes insisted on appointing the urban officials themselves. It was not that the Milanese aristocracy had shifted the focus of their political ambitions to the duke's court. Discontented as many Milanese aristocrats were, they had no coherent strategy, although clearly there were those who would have liked a stronger civic government of their own. In 1502 they petitioned Louis XII (who had conquered the duchy), arguing that 'nearly all Italian cities' had the power to elect their own government from among their own citizens.²⁵ The elites of the other cities of the duchy, who already enjoyed such a government, had a clear sense of their own identity, and 'did not feel themselves to be very different' from independent city-states like Lucca or Siena, or from cities such as Perugia or Bologna which preserved many of the characteristics of independent states.²⁶

As elective sovereigns, the popes, often coming to the throne when they were elderly and enjoying comparatively brief reigns, and with officials who were largely ecclesiastics and often came from outside the Papal States, needed the collaboration of local elites if they were to rule their dominions effectively, more even than princes like the Dukes of Milan, according to Sandro Carocci.²⁷ On the other hand,

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 390–1.

²⁵ Léon-G. Pélissier, *Documents pour l'histoire de la domination française dans le Milanais (1499–1513)* (Toulouse, 1891), p. 77.

²⁶ Chittolini, 'Governo ducale e poteri locali', p. 35; *idem*, 'Di alcuni aspetti della crisi dello stato sforzesco', in Jean-Marie Cauchies and Giorgio Chittolini (eds.), *Milano e Borgogna. Due stati principeschi tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Rome, 1990), pp. 21–34; Giuliana Fantoni, 'Aristocrazia cittadina e ceti popolari nel tardo medioevo. Seminario dell'Istituto Storico Italo-germanico in Trento (7–14 settembre 1981)', *Nuova rivista storica* 66 (1982), pp. 184–5.

²⁷ Sandro Carocci, 'Governo papale e città nello Stato della Chiesa. Ricerche sul Quattrocento', in Sergio Gensini (ed.), *Principi e città alla fine del Medioevo* (Pisa, 1996), p. 216.

the popes of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had repeated opportunities to alter the structure of civic government in many of their subject towns and cities. Not only did communities such as Bologna that had *capitoli* with the pope have to obtain confirmation of them from each new pontiff, but as dynasties of papal vicars died out or were dislodged and the towns that they had ruled came under the direct dominion of the Church, so new institutions of government had to be set up. At such moments, when there would be special concern about the loyalty of civic elites to the papal government, 'new' men might be added to the councils and the number of councillors increased.

After Cesena, for example, returned to the direct rule of the papacy on the death of Malatesta Novello Malatesta in 1465, Paul II increased the number of councillors from 72 to 96 'with clear antioligarchic intentions'.²⁸ While the Council had represented the old nobility, the doctors of law and the rich, representatives of the *popolari* were brought not only into the council, but into the new executive commission of Anziani and Conservatori, although the Anziani, for example, were denominated 'Anziani di Consiglio' and 'Anziani di Popolo'. After the years from 1500 to 1504 when Cesare Borgia had been *signore* of the city and the institutions of civic government had been neglected, 'la parte plebea et del popullo' (the party of the plebeians and of the *popolo*), as a local diarist described them, demanded a larger share in the civic government and received a sympathetic hearing from the papal governor, who was backed by the new pope, Julius II. The decree reforming the government spoke of the worthy men who had not been given the honours and offices they deserved.²⁹ At Imola, Julius II increased the number of councillors to 150 in 1507, partly to prevent the Sassatelli faction dominating the city. In that case, Julius's favourite, the legate Cardinal Francesco Alidosi, whose family had been *signori* of Imola for periods in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, soon reduced the numbers of councillors again, to 90 in 1509 and then to 60 in 1510.³⁰

Such inconsistency was not untypical of papal policy concerning the structure of government in subject towns. Although they would

²⁸ Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*, p. 86.

²⁹ Pier Giovanni Fabbri, *Cesena tra Quattro e Cinquecento. Dai Malatesta al Valentino a Giulio II: la città, le vicende, le fonti* (Ravenna, 1990), pp. 20–2, 98.

³⁰ Zenobi, *Le "Ben Regolate Città"*, pp. 81–2.

intervene to try to secure the participation of men loyal to the papacy, to prevent the dominance of a faction or to meet discontent from those excluded, they would not resist oligarchic developments if they did not pose a threat to papal government or to public order. If at times they were obliged to tolerate the dominance of a single family and their allies, such as the Baglioni or the Bentivoglio, or if they set up members of their own families as *signori* of papal towns, on the whole they seem to have preferred to deal with elites that were not restricted to a few families or to one faction, elites that encompassed a broader group. Given the choice, too, they might well have preferred an open elite, or at least one to which they could promote individuals or families they felt deserved to enter the privileged group. But they were prepared to sanction councils closed to newcomers, in which membership was *de facto* or *de jure* hereditary. When the popes did approve the closing of civic councils to a defined elite, nine times out of ten they were responding to local initiatives.³¹ The complexity of the play of forces between local elites and the popes and their officials in shaping the institutions of civic government was evident in the two main provincial cities of the Papal States, Perugia and Bologna.

Several popes intervened to reform the government of Perugia, with more or less success. Paul II in 1466 ordered a series of measures intended to reduce the power of the political elite, including the most comprehensive intervention in the process of compilation of the electoral purses that the Perugians could remember happening under any regime. The papal governor had a representative from each of the five territorial divisions of the city, the *porte* (gates), sent to him, and then detained them until they had provided lists of nine hundred citizens, 'the most loyal to Holy Church that they knew'. From these lists the governor then chose three hundred names, to be placed in the purses for office-holders for the next five years. This was seen as a blow to the credit of the principal men of the regime, who attracted partisans by making up the purses, and thus distributing the offices, to suit themselves. It pleased the *popolo* to see the offices distributed equitably and not following favour and corruption.³²

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 184–5.

³² ASMa, AGonzaga, b. 843, c. 90: Gian Pietro Arrivabene to Barbara Gonzaga, 3 Oct. 1466, Rome; Carocci, 'Governo papale e città', pp. 214–5.

As manipulation of the purses was one of the foundations of the regime of the nobles in Perugia, and it was a principal source of factional conflict, the problem was a perennial one. There had been earlier attempts to deal with it, and more would be made in later years.³³ In 1486, when disputes about making up the purses anew became mixed up with the divisive question of whether some political exiles should be allowed to return, Innocent VIII forbade any further discussion of the matter in Perugia and commanded a number of leading nobles to go to Rome to debate the matter before him. Ordering them to make up the purses in Rome, Innocent warned them that if they did not nominate worthy men to be Priors, he would tear up the name slips. When they could not come to agreement he ordered the legate of Perugia, who was in Rome, to see to the compilation of the purses.³⁴

Disliking the trouble caused by this vexed question of the electoral purses, many Perugians apparently did not resent what could easily have been seen as intrusion by the pope into such a sensitive area of their civic government. It was the trouble it caused that gave the popes a reason to intervene. Although the result of such interventions was to diminish (if only temporarily) the influence of the leading nobles, the popes were not deliberately setting out to alter the balance of social forces in the civic government or to manipulate the political factions to increase papal control over it. A more equitable distribution of offices would help to avoid recurring disturbances. Curbing the power of the nobles, if that was what was required, was a means to that end, not the end itself.

Innocent had also nominated 115 men to form a new council, dubbed by the Perugians the "ecclesiastical council", who were to be summoned when needed to give advice. This did not take root, and it is not known how long the members of this council were supposed to serve, or how they were to be replaced. From the list of members, it would appear that the pope had been concerned to provide a balanced representation of the factions in the council. His aim may well have been to provide a way to ensure that all the factions had a voice, rather than to lay the foundation for an heredi-

³³ C.F. Black, 'Commune and the Papacy in the government of Perugia, 1488-1540', *Annali della Fondazione italiana per la storia amministrativa*, 4 (1967), pp. 178-81.

³⁴ 'Cronaca di Pietro Angelo di Giovanni', 9 (1903), pp. 257-64.

tary, exclusive council to define the political elite.³⁵ Another council, the executive Dieci dell'Arbitrio, that might have formed the basis for a narrower, exclusive oligarchy, was eliminated by Julius II. It had already been abolished once by Alexander VI in 1500, who declared that it was encroaching illegally on the powers of the Priors, but had been revived in December 1503. Julius abolished it again on similar grounds in September 1506, after he had brought an army to Perugia to curb the power of the Baglioni. Later councils which took the same or a similar name were appointed for short terms only, to deal with specific problems or crises. In the 1520s and 1530s, larger general councils with up to five hundred members or more, were summoned by papal officials to take on this role, to broaden the base from whom they were appealing for support. Nevertheless, the most prominent families were fully represented in these councils, and papal officials were not attempting to build up a 'popolare' party to challenge their power.³⁶

The example of Perugia shows how factional troubles could offer the papacy openings to intervene to shape the civic government, without arousing the opposition of the citizens. One reason the popes were able to do this in Perugia was that, despite the importance for the patronage of the Baglioni and other powerful families of their manipulation of appointments to civic office, their power was not based on control of the councils, or exercised through them. It was a different matter for the Bentivoglio and their allies, which made the task of curbing their power a more difficult one.

The Sixteen insisted that they governed Bologna with the representative of the pope, and were quick to object if papal officials or the pope should imply that they were bound to obey them. 'According to the order of the government of this city, the legate should not give us commands nor do we have to obey his lieutenant, because they cannot settle anything without us, and similarly' (they conceded in theory but did not observe in practice) 'we cannot settle anything without them'.³⁷ 'Legates or governors and their lieutenants cannot do anything, according to the form of our Capitoli, "without the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 266–9.

³⁶ Black, 'The Baglioni as tyrants of Perugia', pp. 260, 269–71; Black, 'Commune and the Papacy in the government of Perugia', pp. 182–90.

³⁷ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 423, ff. 406r–407v: Anziani and Sixteen to Bonifacio Cattaneo and Giovanni Filippo Salarolo, 23 Sept. 1488.

consent of the magistrates”’, they reminded the Bolognese envoys in Rome in October 1484.³⁸ The fact that this authority of the Sixteen rested on the Capitoli with the pope, rather than the statutes of the commune, could undermine their position, however. Each new pope had to confirm the Capitoli if they were to remain in force, which meant they repeatedly had to be defended against attempts to alter them. If pushed, the Sixteen were ready to argue that maintaining the Capitoli would be to the advantage of the pope as well as the city, because the pope would not be able to govern Bologna without the consent and goodwill of the citizens. Joint government by the papal representative and the civic magistracies had kept the peace in Bologna for over fifty years, they argued when Alexander VI wanted to impose his authority on the city. The papacy had never had any lasting authority or jurisdiction in Bologna before the Bolognese, out of reverence for the Church, had agreed the Capitoli with Nicholas V, enabling the popes to place their legates, treasurers and other officials there. This had brought ‘great honour, profit and such reputation to Holy Church’ that the pope should be well satisfied with what he had and not disturb these mutually beneficial arrangements.³⁹

Before Alexander VI, the pope who had posed the greatest threat to the form of government the Sixteen defended so vigorously was Paul II, when he refused to renew the Capitoli in 1465. He objected that the Sixteen had contravened the terms of the Capitoli by keeping the same members permanently in office, which was contrary to the norms of a properly-constituted civic government (*‘politia’*).⁴⁰ Paul’s volte-face, when the following year he recognized that the members of the Sixteen should keep their offices for life and that their seats could be inherited by their sons, was a great surprise, even to the Bolognese envoys in Rome. Some suspected that, by according a privileged position to Giovanni Bentivoglio, who was to stay in office all the time while the rest of the Sixteen were to sit for six months each year, the pope was hoping that the other members of the oligarchy would turn against him; Bentivoglio himself ini-

³⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 106v–107r: Sixteen to Lodovico di Sampiero and Bonifacio Cattaneo, 30 Oct. 1484.

³⁹ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 425, ff. 45r–48r: Sixteen to Mino de’ Rossi, 8 Jan. 1501; ff. 140v–144r: Sixteen to Vincenzo Budriolo, 17 Sept. 1502.

⁴⁰ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 147.

tially had doubts about the arrangement. Diplomatic pressure, and the threat of military support for Giovanni Bentivoglio from Francesco Sforza was the most likely explanation for the pope's change of mind. Paul complained that Francesco Sforza was not using his influence in Bologna to constrain Bentivoglio to obey the pope, but then declared himself satisfied with what he viewed as a compromise. He had, he claimed, been urged to take Bologna under his direct government, but had decided that he would have had no more success than earlier popes in keeping control of the city that way.⁴¹

It took a military expedition led by the pope in person, and the threat of French troops attacking Bologna in his support, for Julius II to fulfil his wish of ousting Giovanni Bentivoglio and changing the government of the city in 1506.⁴² After exasperating Julius by intimating that they were not prepared to accept the papal troops into Bologna, the Sixteen then sent a message that they would be prepared to make him welcome if he did not try to alter the Capitoli, but if he did that, they would defend themselves. Julius told the Bolognese envoys who came to see him in Rimini that he and earlier popes had been forced to agree to the Capitoli out of necessity, so that he had a duty to God to correct them when he could. If he did not like the way Bologna was governed, he would change it, by force, if need be.⁴³ Recognizing his position had finally become untenable, Giovanni Bentivoglio fled the city with his sons before the papal troops arrived, and there was no obstruction to Julius reforming the government, replacing the Sixteen with a commission of Forty.

Such a change merely broadened the oligarchy in government, but did not replace it. The members of the Sixteen (apart from Bentivoglio himself) were joined by members of other leading families, including those such as the Marescotti and Malvezzi who had become opponents of the Bentivoglio. The Forty regarded themselves as succeeding to the position and powers of the Sixteen, formally recording in their deliberations that if the powers of the legate were

⁴¹ Ady, *The Bentivoglio*, p. 62; Albano Sorbelli, *I Bentivoglio, Signori di Bologna* (Rocca San Casciano, 1969), pp. 60–61.

⁴² Shaw, *Julius II*, pp. 151–2, 157–61.

⁴³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Legazioni e commissarie*, ed. S. Bertelli, 3 vols (Milan, 1964), II, pp. 997–8, 1006–8: N. Machiavelli to Dieci di Balìa, 26 Sept. 1506, Urbino, 3 Oct. 1506, Cesena.

to be increased to permit him to take decisions without their agreement, it would be prejudicial to the peace and the papal government of the city.⁴⁴ Declaring that they would be prepared to be removed from office rather than accept such a situation, the Forty seem to have been successful in persuading the pope not to increase the powers of the legate to act alone.⁴⁵ What Julius would not accept was their desire to appoint replacement members to the Forty themselves by co-option; he insisted they should propose a list of three or four candidates from among whom he would choose one. Such a procedure, the Forty argued in vain, would discourage those who had close relatives who would be suitable to take their place, and would reduce the authority and reputation of the Forty in the eyes of the *popolo*.⁴⁶ Julius was also concerned when he was told that voting in the Forty was not the free expression of the opinions of the councillors but was directed by the will of a few men, and that letters written on behalf of the Forty were known only to a few and had not been generally approved. Voting was free, the Forty assured him, and all members participated in discussions and decisions.⁴⁷

Cardinal Francesco Alidosi, who became legate of Bologna in May 1508, was not a man to observe the niceties of the working partnership between the papal legate and the Forty. His arrogance and misgovernment prepared the Bolognese to accept the Bentivoglio when they seized their chance to return with the support of the French in May 1511. The Forty were replaced by the Sixteen, who insisted that Bologna was still loyal to the Church.⁴⁸ Naturally, Julius did not see it like that. When the Bentivoglio left for exile again in June 1512, he was not inclined to be indulgent, or to accept the argument put forward by the Bolognese that all the travails of the

⁴⁴ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 390, Reg. 13, ff. 15v–16r.

⁴⁵ ASMo, ASE, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Roma, b. 16, 98–XV/40: Beltrando Costabili to Alfonso d'Este, 12 Feb. 1507, Bologna; De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, pp. 187–90. Cardinal Antonio Ferreri, who was appointed legate, bribed the officials who drew up the bull outlining his powers so that it specified powers he was not meant to have, but he was soon recalled to Rome, where he was imprisoned. (Shaw, *Julius II*, p. 211.)

⁴⁶ ASBol, Comune governo, Registrum Litterarum, b. 7, ff. 69r–70r: Forty to Ercole Bentivoglio, Francesco Fantucci and Alberto de' Albergati, 16 Aug. 1507.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 163v–164v: Forty to Girolamo de San Pietro and Antonio dalla Sala, 19 Apr. 1508.

⁴⁸ ASBol, Comune governo, b. 8, f. 119r: Sixteen to Cardinal de' Grassi, 1 June 1511.

city had been caused by failure to observe the old form of government as outlined in the Capitoli.⁴⁹ The Anziani and other communal magistracies urged on Julius the necessity of appointing 'a magistracy of a number of Bolognese gentlemen, pleasing to His Holiness', to help the legate in the government of the city. It would be better for them not to be too numerous, 'because a multitude often causes confusion', and for the magistracy to be 'permanent and not temporary'.⁵⁰ He would provide a government such that industrious men could go about their business in peace, Julius responded, describing the Sixteen and the Forty as tyrants. It appeared that he had been told that 'the magistracy of patricians' he was being asked to set up would be 'abhorrent' to the *popolo*.⁵¹

Nothing had been settled before Julius's death in February 1513. The envoys sent to his successor, Leo X, were instructed to explain to him that the city had been endangered by the lack of 'that government of gentlemen that is required and fitting, and without which necessary provisions cannot be made satisfactorily', and to ask for a 'perpetual magistracy' like the Sixteen, and with the powers the Sixteen had had under the Capitoli of Nicholas V.⁵² What Leo agreed was to restore not the Sixteen but the Forty, which came to be known as the Senate. There was some resistance within Bologna, notably from the Tribuni della Plebe, to the assumption by the Forty of increasing control over various aspects of civic government, and their claim to be the sole legitimate interlocutor with the pope. Attempts by the Tribunes to appeal to the pope were branded as 'seditious', as wanting to have 'two heads in one city'.⁵³ Rather than use these appeals to try to undermine the hold of the oligarchy over the civic government of Bologna, the popes tended to support the objections of the Forty against the appeals of the Tribunes.⁵⁴ The Senators of Bologna would still be invoking the Capitoli agreed with

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 192v–194v: instructions to Bolognese envoys going to Rome, 15 June 1512.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 211v–212r: Anziani etc. to Lorenzo Malvezzi, 23 Sept. 1512.

⁵¹ ASBol, Senato, Carteggio, Serie VII, vol. 1: Bolognese envoys to Anziani etc., 13, 17 Oct. 1512, Rome.

⁵² De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 198.

⁵³ Cecilia Ciuccarelli, 'Giustizia o sedizione? I Tribuni della Plebe tra Bologna e Roma 1522–1559', in Angela De Benedictis (ed.), *Diritti in memoria, carità di patria: Tribuni della plebe e governo popolare a Bologna (XIV–XVIII secolo)* (Bologna, 1999), p. 106.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–34.

Nicholas V as the rightful foundation of the relations between the civic government and the papal government in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

In the towns under the direct rule of the king in Naples (many towns formed part of the demesne of barons and came under their jurisdiction), King Ferrante, it has been argued, intervened to give a greater role in civic government to *popolari*. At Lecce, for example, in 1472 Ferrante imposed a revision of the regulations governing elections to the Council of twenty-four members and the distribution of office. Protests from the town—for this reform had not been requested by the citizens—were met with a letter from the king insisting that his orders be carried out. Ferrante's aim, apparently, was to bring the government of Lecce more into line with that of other towns in the province of Puglia, where the *popolari* were better represented, rather than to alter the balance of social forces. A subsequent reform of the statute in 1479 reinforces this impression, as the division of the Council between equal numbers of 'nobles' and 'artisans' did not reflect the social structure of Lecce, where professional men 'living nobly' but not recognized as nobles were prominent. Lack of documentation for the late fifteenth century makes it impossible to be sure how long these statutes remained in force, but they seem to have been changed or ignored at least by the mid 1490s. The next set of statutes, issued in 1522, provided for the representation of three groups in the council, 'gentiluomini', 'citatini', and 'artesani', the last with a smaller share than that laid down by the statutes of 1479.⁵⁶ If Ferrante was trying to alter the structure of the civic government of Lecce to bring it more into line with that of other towns in the region, the failure of the reforms to take root would illustrate the pitfalls of imposing a pattern of government that did not reflect the particular social structure of a town.

But this was not Ferrante's policy, according to Raffaele Colapietra, who attributed the reforms of statutes in towns in Puglia and elsewhere in the kingdom to Ferrante's son, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria. As Alfonso began to take a greater part in governing the kingdom in the 1470s, Colapietra argued, he had a coherent policy of curbing the particularism of local oligarchies and enhancing royal con-

⁵⁵ De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 388.

⁵⁶ Carmela Massaro, 'Territorio, società e potere', in Benedetto Vetere (ed.), *Storia di Lecce dai Bizantini agli Aragonesi* (Bari, 1993), pp. 330–4.

trol over the towns by increasing the role of the small tradesmen and the guilds. All the revisions of civic statutes sponsored by Alfonso in Calabria in the 1470s outlined a similar structure of government, and 'in all the cities, predominance of the nobility in the councils was avoided', and the statutory legislation he issued in Puglia had the same objectives.⁵⁷

It is difficult to assess what motives lay behind the policy—if policy there was—of enhancing the role of the *popolari* in the government of the towns. Paucity of evidence is one handicap. Discussions of the relations between the crown and the towns in Naples under the Aragonese kings are perforce largely based on the privileges, statutes and agreements approved or granted by the kings, because of the lack of information about the regular business of civic government. Such discussions have tended to be skewed by the assumptions of historians—especially by the assumption that the kings should have made common cause with the towns against the barons. This underlies Colapietra's arguments, and Guido d'Agostino's assertion that Ferrante conferred favours on the towns of the royal demesne as part of a strategy to build up a 'king's party'.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Giuseppe Galasso argued that the crown had to recognize that the barons were much stronger than the towns, and that there were limits to how useful the support of the towns could be.⁵⁹

Whatever the motives behind them, it can be said of the statutes and privileges granted to towns by the Aragonese kings of Naples that they did include the *popolari*, and did in some instances enhance their share in the civic government. Occasionally, the initiative for political reform in favour of the *popolari* can be seen to have come from the town. When Molfetta came into the royal demesne with the many other towns that had been part of the vast estates of Giovanni Antonio Orsini, the Prince of Taranto, after his death, the *università* petitioned the king that 'all the *popolo* . . . can enjoy all the offices, prerogatives, immunities and honours that the gentlemen of Molfetta enjoy'.⁶⁰ The primary concern of most of those presenting

⁵⁷ Raffaele Colapietra, 'Gli aspetti interni della crisi della monarchia Aragonese', *Archivio storico italiano*, 119 (1961), pp. 177–83.

⁵⁸ Guido d'Agostino, 'Il Mezzogiorno Aragonese (Napoli dal 1458 al 1503)', in *Storia di Napoli*, Vol. IV.1 (Naples, 1974), p. 247.

⁵⁹ Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia*, pp. 105–6.

⁶⁰ Giovanni Papuli, 'Documenti editi ed inediti sui rapporti tra le università di

petitions on behalf of the towns that had been under the Prince of Taranto was, however, the preservation of regimes that gave a privileged position to the richer citizens. Ferrante agreed to nearly all the petitions presented; those he refused were generally requests by communities to take over personal property of Giovanni Antonio Orsini that the king wanted for himself.⁶¹ Petitions to the king from the towns of the kingdom and his grants to them were generally concerned with economic and fiscal matters, rather than primarily political questions. Giovanni Cassandro suggested that it was conflicts between political factions that opened up opportunities for the crown to intervene, dictate norms for the structure of civic governments and guarantee the inclusion of different social groups to repress factional strife.⁶² There is no evidence of any consistent policy to favour the development of more oligarchical forms of government.

The Aragonese kings have been accused of deliberately excluding the *popolari* from the government of the most important city of their kingdom, Naples itself. The origins of this assertion have been traced back to an influential early history of the kingdom by Giovanni Antonio Summonte. He added to an account of the destruction by Alfonso I of one of the meeting places of the Seggio del Popolo, the organization of the *popolari* of Naples, the comment that the tumultuous objection of the *popolo* to this led to Alfonso ordering their exclusion from the civic government in 1457. But the contemporary chronicle on which Summonte based his account made no mention of the Seggio del Popolo being excluded from the government; it seems that they were already excluded.⁶³ What the patchy evidence for the civic government of Naples under the Angevin monarchs seems to indicate is that the *popolari* joined the nobles in directing the affairs of the city at times of crisis, but did not have a regular role in the main executive body, known as the Tribunale di San

Puglia e Ferdinando I alla morte di Giovanni Antonio del Balzo Orsini', in *Studi di storia pugliese in onore di Nicola Vacca* (Galatina, 1971), p. 426.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 384–7, 409.

⁶² Giovanni Cassandro, 'Il comune meridionale nell'Età Aragonese', *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi sull'Età Aragonese* (Bari, 15–18 dicembre 1968) (Bari, no date), p. 164.

⁶³ Giovanni Antonio Summonte, *Dell'Historia della città e Regno di Napoli*, 4 vols (Naples, 1675), III, f. 117r; Ernesto Pontieri, 'Dinastia, Regno e capitale nel Mezzogiorno Aragonese', in *Storia di Napoli*, Vol. IV.1 (Naples, 1974), pp. 78–80; M. Schipa, 'Contese sociali napoletane nel Medio evo', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, 32 (1907), pp. 787–97.

Lorenzo (from the name of the monastery where it met).⁶⁴ Ferrante increased the role of the representatives, the Eletti, of the five noble Seggi, who constituted the Tribunale di San Lorenzo, in the government of the city in 1476, but made no attempt to give the Seggio del Popolo a seat on the Tribunale.⁶⁵

When the kingdom of Naples suffered prolonged political turmoil at the end of the century, the *popolari* of the city of Naples again joined the nobles—for a while, replaced the nobles—in the government of the city, and this time kept a place in the Tribunale di San Lorenzo when the storms had passed. After his conquest of the kingdom of Naples in 1495, the French king, Charles VIII, expressed surprise that the *popolo* of so fine a city as Naples did not share in its government. He asked to meet an assembly of *popolari*, in which he was told that the *popolo* had had representatives in the government under the Angevins and that the Aragonese had removed them. In return for the promise of a substantial loan, the king granted them the right to elect a representative of the Seggio del Popolo to join those of the noble Seggi on the Tribunale.⁶⁶ The support of the *popolo* for the young king Ferrandino after he had recovered his kingdom from the French, and the absence of many nobles from Naples, brought the *popolari* control of the city, but this ended when Ferrandino's uncle, Federigo, succeeded him in October 1496. Federigo's arbitration in the disputes between the *popolari* and the nobles over the share of the *popolari* in the civic government reduced that share. Whereas the assent of the Eletto of the *popolo* had been needed for decisions on financial matters to be reached, for example, Federigo decreed that only a majority of votes would be needed, and the vote of the *popolare* Eletto would have no more weight than any of the others.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Michelangelo Schipa, 'Nobili e popolani in Napoli nel medioevo in rapporto all'amministrazione municipale', *Archivio storico italiano*, 83 (1925), pp. 3–44, 187–248.

⁶⁵ d'Agostino, 'Il Mezzogiorno Aragonese', pp. 249–51.

⁶⁶ Schipa, 'Contese sociali napoletane', 33 (1908), pp. 86–98; at pp. 103–27, Schipa prints the chronicle on which he bases this account of Charles's dealings with the *popolari*.

⁶⁷ M. Schipa, 'Il Popolo di Napoli dal 1495 al 1522 (curiosità storiche)', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, 34 (1909), pp. 292–318, 461–88; d'Agostino, 'Il Mezzogiorno Aragonese', pp. 271–88; Eleni Sakellariou, 'Institutional and social continuities in the kingdom of Naples between 1443 and 1528', in David Abulafia (ed.), *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 343–8.

In Sicily in the mid fifteenth century, King Alfonso and his viceroy were sympathetic to prolonged attempts by the *popolari* of Messina to increase their share in the government of the city. In this instance, the *popolari* included rich merchants and shipowners and notaries, as well as artisans, but they met with determined resistance from the closed circle of families who dominated the *giurazia* and did not want to share either that office or the economic opportunities it brought. Support from the Crown enabled the *popolari* in 1450 'to realize the most important political reform ever put into effect, up until then, in Messina', giving them an equal share of seats on the *giurazia* to that of the nobles.⁶⁸ Another measure which the king approved, the admission of two consuls from each guild to the council, was rejected by the Sicilian parliament on the grounds that the consuls were 'uneducated and unlettered'.⁶⁹ In 1456, the *popolari* renounced their right to a share of seats in the *giurazia*, apparently because the different social groups among them had been unable to maintain their cohesion in the face of the stubborn resistance of the entrenched noble families, but they did retain their share of other offices. The support they had received from the Crown also weakened, as the supreme royal council on the island, the *Sacro Regio Consiglio*, became concerned that the example of the changes to the government of Messina might provoke political unrest in other Sicilian towns.⁷⁰

In the early sixteenth century, when the entrenched oligarchy of *giurati* attempted to contain the power of royal representatives in the city and to subject them to local control, the viceroy took them on, and in 1514 exiled some *giurati*. Prolonged diplomacy and a substantial financial gift to the king were needed to appease his anger. The oligarchy had overreached themselves in their challenge to the Crown, and had to accept a reform of the government, negotiated by the viceroy in 1516, giving the *popolari* an equal share in all offices except the *giurazia*, which would have two 'Popolari' and four 'Gentiluomini'. The *Gentiluomini* could not deliberate without the two *Popolari*, unless the absent *giurati* had been personally sum-

⁶⁸ Salvo, *Giurati, feudatari, mercanti*, p. 128.

⁶⁹ 'persone idioti et illeterati': *ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–7.

moned and had a legitimate reason for being unable to attend. This new arrangement, sanctioned by the Crown, proved lasting.⁷¹

Generally, when the king or his viceroy became involved in modifying the structure and institutions of municipal government in the towns and cities of Sicily, they were responding to petitions, sanctioning changes that had their genesis in shifts in the local balance of power, and were not initiating change themselves.⁷² As a rule, the viceroys of Sicily and the princes and republics of mainland Italy found the maintenance of good relations with local elites the most effective way to govern their states, and this might well favour the development or consolidation of an oligarchy. If those local elites behaved in too independent a fashion, or seemed to look to other rulers to protect their position, as that of Bologna did, then their superiors might try to curb their power. One way of doing this would be to seek to broaden participation in the government of the town, as at Messina, or Turin. It need not be assumed that if they did this, it would necessarily have gone against the grain with them. If rulers or their representatives could respond to arguments that it was unfitting for the poor or the unlettered to have an equal voice in councils with the learned and the wealthy, they could also respond to arguments that it was unjust for a few to arrogate to themselves all the powers of the civic government and the control of resources this could bring. The most persuasive argument for any change would be that it would make for more orderly government.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 162–74.

⁷² See, for example, Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando il Cattolico a Carlo V*, I, pp. 258–67.

CHAPTER TEN

POPULAR GOVERNMENT UNDER PRESSURE

Orderly government was also something to be desired in an ally; it implied the ability to mobilize resources, to raise money and troops to fulfil obligations under alliances and leagues. In this sphere, popular governments were at a disadvantage. Criticisms of their shortcomings as allies were 'almost proverbial':¹ their unreliability, their delays in coming to decisions, their reluctance to spend, their timidity. Nicodemo da Pontremoli, Francesco Sforza's envoy to Florence and Siena, for example, was given to blaming the frustrations and delays he encountered on the failings of popular government. The Florentines and the Siennese, he declared in October 1453, are behaving as *popoli* do, like hares and rabbits.² *Popoli* 'always spend unwillingly, especially in peace time',³ he wrote; 'they cannot keep anything secret'.⁴ Since 'it is a common fault of *popoli*' to be slow in coming to the aid of their associates, Francesco Sforza reproached Pietro Campofregoso in May 1452, the Doge should remind the Genoese of their duty, their honour and their obligations to the league, and make clear to them the danger they would be in if the league foundered because of their inaction.⁵ 'The nature of *popoli* is like that of the sea, which is never still', Pope Paul II observed to the Siennese ambassador, asking if he really thought the Siennese would stick to their latest decision in their dispute with the Count of Pitigliano in which the pope was acting as a mediator.⁶ It is not good to write

¹ Riccardo Fubini, 'Appunti sui rapporti diplomatici fra il dominio sforzesco e Firenze medicea. Modi e tecniche dell'ambasciata dalle trattative per la lega italcica alla missione di Sacromoro da Rimini (1451-1473)', in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli Stati italiani ed europei (1450-1535). Convegno internazionale: Milano, 18-21 maggio 1981* (Milan, 1982), p. 327.

² ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 266: Nicodemo da Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza, 9 Oct. 1453, Florence.

³ Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali*, p. 59.

⁴ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 269: Nicodemo to F. Sforza, 23 Oct. 1458, Florence.

⁵ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 407: copy of Francesco Sforza to the Doge, 27 May 1452, Lodi Vecchia.

⁶ Mengozzi, 'Il Pontefice Paolo II ed i senesi', 21 (1914), p. 249.

to *popoli* about important matters, Paul complained on another occasion, because his letters would be read out in the Council; the Sienese should keep an ambassador in Rome to whom he could speak about confidential matters.⁷ Members of popular regimes could echo such critical generalizations. It is difficult to get *popoli* to agree to what others want of them, Francesco Aringhieri warned.⁸ Our *popolo* is like all the others, lamented Cristofano Gabrielli, they no sooner agree to terms than they begin to demand something directly contrary to them.⁹

The shortcomings of popular government—of ‘uno governo di moltitudine’—in external policy, were commented on at length by one of the participants in Francesco Guicciardini’s ‘Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze’. They lacked foresight, and could only see and understand the course of events when it was obvious to all, and too late to take preventive measures without great trouble and expense. Should any wise man give a timely warning, he would be cried down, accused of ambition or some other private interest. *Popoli* did not like to face up to difficulties or expense. A ‘governo largo’ did not have the means to find out the secrets of other powers, as a ‘governo stretto’ could: who would pass on information if it would not be kept secret? Revealing such matters to *pratiche* or councils was as good as issuing a proclamation about them. Who in the service of an enemy but a madman would venture on entering into a conspiracy with a popular government? The inability to reach rapid decisions was another handicap. It was difficult for a *popolo* to build up relations of understanding and mutual confidence with other powers, when those who governed were continually changing and with the changes of men could easily come changes of opinion and intentions. When the time came for decisions to be made by a large assembly, there were often delays because of irresolution or confusion. Popular governments could not maintain good relations with the mercenary soldiers they would employ in time of war, and dismiss or fail to pay in time of peace, and consequently would not be well served by them. Because of all these weaknesses, popular gov-

⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 (1917), p. 247.

⁸ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 261: Francesco Aringhieri to Francesco Sforza, 23 Dec. 1460, Siena.

⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 262: Cristofano Gabrielli to Cicco Simonetta, 10 June 1461, Siena.

ernments were inclined to avoid war and stay neutral in conflicts in which it was much better that they should take an active part, if they were to protect and promote the interests of the state.¹⁰

Such attitudes were not just expressions of prejudice against popular government—they were the expression of experience. Popular governments were handicapped in their external relations, especially during times of crisis and war. Knowledge of their difficulties and failings in managing a consistent and vigorous external policy hindered their search for reliable allies. Although there were those who thought that republics were natural allies—so that, for example, some Florentines thought it more fitting to be allied with Venice rather than Milan—appeals to republican solidarity could make little impact when there were conflicts of interest. Between states with popular governments there was little natural sympathy, or hope for mutual support that did not have other, more practical, foundations. External relations would be among the most difficult issues a popular government would have to face, while the question of how far it might be necessary or desirable to compromise the principles on which the government was based in order to defend the interests of the state could be one of the most contentious aspects of all.

In diplomacy, representatives of popular governments would often be at a disadvantage. Popular governments tended not to maintain resident ambassadors or other envoys, even with their allies, as princes and oligarchical governments were increasingly doing in the later fifteenth century. Genoa and Lucca only sent envoys on specific, limited missions. At times in the 1480s and early 1490s Siena had a resident agent in Florence, but neither Tommaso Biringucci nor Andrea del Panta, who both held this position, were accredited as ambassadors or accorded much status for their work. More frequently, the Sienese kept an ambassador in Rome, but they preferred if they could to use a Sienese citizen already in Rome on his own account, holding a post in the papal administration, for example. Generally, Sienese envoys were sent on short-term embassies. The Sienese did not like the expense of regular diplomatic embassies, or of the couriers needed to maintain communication with them—although it has to be said that the pleas of unpaid princely representatives, struggling to maintain an honourable appearance as their

¹⁰ Guicciardini, *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze*, pp. 95–104.

debts mounted and credit became hard to find, could be just as desperate as those of Sienese envoys. But Sienese reluctance to spend on the apparatus of diplomacy was evident in other ways too. When in 1471 the government could not lay their hands on a copy of the Sienese ratification of the general league of Italian states of 1455 which was to be confirmed, their ambassador in Rome, Goro Loli, reminded them that the general practice was for states acceding to a league to have a formal copy, a 'public instrument', made and to keep it. 'But sometimes we are so stingy that, so as not to pay out fifty ducats for a document, we incur damage and dishonour.'¹¹ Florence when ruled by a popular government from 1494 to 1512 was something of an exception, maintaining the practice of keeping resident envoys that had developed under the Medici. Their most important embassies were in Rome, and at the court of the King of France; for a time they kept an embassy at the court of the Emperor Maximilian as well.

Reports by Florentine envoys during that period are often less informative, less penetrating in their analysis—even if some were written by Niccolò Machiavelli—than those that had been produced by their predecessors during the period of Lorenzo de' Medici's dominance. The quality of diplomatic reports depends on the quality of the information available to the envoy, as much as on his powers of analysis. The information available to an envoy, to some degree, depends on the regard in which the government he represents is held by the government to which he is accredited. Representatives of popular governments in Renaissance Italy do not seem to have enjoyed the same degree of access to those to whom they were accredited as the representatives of other governments could hope for. If they were only temporary envoys, as they tended to be, their problems were compounded by the lack of opportunity to build up a network of useful contacts that a resident envoy would have.

They might also have to contend with a sometimes barely-concealed lack of respect for the government which had sent them. Paul II's acid observations to Sienese envoys on the perceived shortcomings of the Sienese government were not exceptional. Governments and their representatives were aware of the slights to which popular governments were subject. Envoys of a popular government, faced

¹¹ Mengozzi, 'Il Pontefice Paolo II ed i Senesi', 25 (1918), pp. 43–4.

by criticisms of the regime they spoke for, could assure the critics that decisions were taken by worthy responsible men. When Pandolfo Petrucci complained to a Florentine ambassador passing through Siena on his way to Rome in 1501, that he did not like there being such a broadly-based government in Florence, the ambassador replied that although many took part in appointing to offices, only a small group were involved in decisions concerning affairs of state.¹² It was concern for the image of Florence, and the disdain that Florentine envoys had encountered 'when they are with princes or other powers' because of the official title of the body that accredited them, that made the Florentines decide in 1459 to change the title of the Priors of the Signoria from the 'Priors of the Guilds' to the 'Priors of Liberty', to remove the impression that these were humble men.¹³ However central the Council of the People was to Sienese political life, it is notable that the Sienese themselves when writing of their affairs to those outside the city rarely used that title; they tended to refer to it just as 'the council'. In internal documents, it was always given its full title.

When choosing ambassadors and other envoys popular governments showed awareness of the need to assert the dignity of their states. Ambassadors were never chosen by lot, by drawing name-slips from electoral purses, nor were they chosen by ballots in large councils even in the most *popolare* of regimes. Careful consideration had to be given to the personal qualities of individuals. Some embassies, such as those sent to pay homage to a newly-elected pope, required a formal public oration to be delivered in Latin before assembled dignitaries, a task that could challenge even the most learned and practised public speakers. When Bartolomeo Sozzini, an academic lawyer in demand by universities throughout Italy, tried to deliver such an oration before Alexander VI, he dried up, and was unable to recover; the pope eventually made his formal reply as though the oration had in fact been completed.¹⁴ Men picked at random from those entitled to hold office in a popular government could hardly be expected to face up to such trials. But even if the embassy would

¹² ASF, X di Balia, Resp. 60, cc. 277–8: Francesco Pepi to Signoria, 1 Mar. 1500(1), Siena.

¹³ Fubini, 'Classe dirigente', p. 181; see above p. 150.

¹⁴ ASF, Otto di Pratica, Resp. 9, c. 45: Filippo Valori, 16 Oct. 1492, Rome.

not require displays of learning and practised eloquence, men were often selected because of their education, their wealth (those chosen to serve as ambassadors rarely made a profit and often had to spend their own money to enable them to keep up appearances) and, if possible, their experience outside their own state as merchants, lawyers or officials. Such attributes were desirable if envoys were to handle the business they were sent to despatch competently and confidently. If they were to go to a princely court, it would be wise to choose someone who would be able to deal with court etiquette, and would not attract the derision of the courtiers. The problem was that men who had such attributes might not be among the most enthusiastic proponents of popular government, or be considered entirely trustworthy by men who readily acknowledged that they themselves would not fit the part. Nor might they be willing to serve as representatives of a popular regime. Finding the right men for the job could be a tricky business.

The problems caused by diplomacy and war necessitated other compromises of the institutional practices of *popolare* government. Negotiations with other states required discretion and secrecy; the conduct of war called for rapid decisions. It was recognized that large councils in which debate was open were not the best venue for discussions of the details of diplomatic questions, nor rapidly changing executive committees whose members were drawn by lot the most suited to deal with the problems arising from war or the prospect of war. Specially-elected or appointed executive committees with delegated extraordinary powers, or *balia*, were usually made responsible for handling such emergencies, and often took their name from the special authority they were given. Once the emergency was over, their authority should, and usually did, cease.

This does not seem to have provoked any problems in Lucca.¹⁵ The Genoese, too, had no qualms about entrusting important or delicate business to special commissions, but *Balie* were regarded as a particular type of special commission that should only be appointed in time of war. For Raffaele Squarciafico, whose proposal was approved by a council in March 1444, the very name 'Balìa' was an indication that the republic was at war; he argued that giving additional authority to an existing special commission, the Nove di Provisione,

¹⁵ Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494*, pp. 8–9, 126–7; Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti*, p. 25.

would suffice in the circumstances.¹⁶ Battista Spinola, speaking in a council in April 1461, made the same point; it was not customary to create a Balia unless there was a war.¹⁷ There was no threat in Genoa that a Balia would become entrenched in power and stay in office after the emergency was over.

In Siena, on the other hand, Balie which had originally been appointed to deal with exceptional circumstances, especially war, did develop into a permanent institution that radically altered the balance in the government of Siena, tipping it towards oligarchy. Under the popular government of the mid-fifteenth century, Balie were appointed to deal with specific problems, and their powers hedged about with prohibitions and restrictions. The reasons given for setting up the first Balia to meet separately from the Concistoro in May 1455 explained both the need felt for a Balia, and the intention that it should not be concerned with the ordinary business of government. Matters of importance to the republic were arising from hour to hour, but could not be dealt with adequately because no special authority had been granted to the Concistoro or to other citizens, and 'having recourse to the councils for everything is not without difficulty and prejudice' to the business in hand. Authority was given jointly to the Balia to be elected and the Concistoro, 'concerning the maintenance of peace with each and every community and lord and to have care of and to watch over our places and property, and to be able to attack those who attack the property of our community'. The members of the Balia were to meet separately from the Concistoro and examine and discuss what was happening on their own, 'so that the said Balia should not give any impediment to the ordinary business and government of the city', but they were to meet with the Concistoro when decisions were to be taken.¹⁸ Even when at the end of the century the Balia had become a *de facto* permanent body, assuming charge of all important ordinary as well as extraordinary business, external dangers were still invoked to justify the renewal of its mandate. Its controversial re-appointment in November 1497 was said to be necessary 'considering the situation in which your city finds itself and that the current discords in

¹⁶ ASG, AS 533, f. 23r-v.

¹⁷ ASG, AS 571, f. 31r-v.

¹⁸ ASS, Concistoro 2118, f. 79r.

Italy and outside Italy are of a nature that they will not be quickly settled.¹⁹

In Florence, the bodies called Balie were of a different nature and had different functions,²⁰ but the commission elected in time of war to deal with external policy and military matters was called the Dieci di Balia. Its members were normally elected for six months at a time, and its mandate would last until peace had been made. Under the Medicean regime, its members could be elected by the Balia if there was one; after the establishment of the council of the Seventy, whose charge included external policy, the Dieci di Balia were appointed by them.²¹ When the Great Council was established as the defining body of the new regime after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, the Dieci di Balia became a focus for those who wanted a greater role for the elite in political affairs. Concern about this was behind the refusal of the Great Council to authorize the re-appointment of the Dieci in May 1499, and the restrictions placed on its powers in appointing military commanders and commissioners and negotiating with other states.²² During the discussions in 1502 about reform of the government, there were suggestions that the Dieci should be given greater authority, and should continue to sit in peacetime, if with a change of name to the Ten of Liberty and Peace, but they were not acceptable to the supporters of popular government. The Dieci in office themselves suggested that what was needed was either a long-term magistracy or a doge.²³ Recognition of the need for an element of continuity in the handling of foreign policy, coupled with the wish to avoid establishing a power base for an oligarchical group in a stronger, permanent Dieci, helped prepare the way for acceptance of the idea of a Gonfaloniere appointed for life. In the preamble to the provision establishing this new office in August 1502, the need for 'someone who occupies himself continuously with external affairs' was one of the two reasons given for the innovation.²⁴ But there would still be a Dieci di Balia, which

¹⁹ ASS, Consiglio Generale 241, f. 33r.

²⁰ See above, p. 197.

²¹ Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*, pp. 34, 59, 77, 229.

²² Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, p. 42; see above, p. 201.

²³ Bertelli, "‘Uno magistrato per a tempo lungho o uno dogie’", pp. 456–64.

²⁴ The other was the need for continuous supervision of the administration of justice. (Pesman Cooper, 'L'elezione di Pier Soderini', p. 160.)

became if anything more powerful during the years that Piero Soderini was life Gonfaloniere.

While extraordinary executive committees would handle the detailed direction of external policy of popular governments, the general outlines of policy would still be decided by the large legislative and deliberative councils. Changes in alliances, treaties, the terms on which peace could be made, would have to be approved by them. In such matters, it was not the proverbial volatility and fickle nature of the *popolo* that could cause problems, so much as a lack of flexibility and adaptability. The more numerous and broadly-based councils would be more likely to reflect, or to feel the need to take account of, the sentiments of the *popolo* at large, and the *popolo* tended to have fixed ideas about the 'natural' allies or enemies of their state. Popular opinion in Florence from 1494 to 1512 clung to the French alliance, no matter how neglectful the French king was of promises to the Florentines, or how demanding he was of them. During the period of 'the last Florentine republic' from 1527 to 1530, there was fixed opposition to any suggestion of coming to an accommodation with the Medici pope, Clement VII. For their part, the Sienese *popolo* had a rooted aversion to the Florentines. In the early 1480s, popular disapproval of the restoration to the Florentines of the lands and townships that had been taken from them during the Pazzi War and given to the Sienese undermined the dominance of the Neapolitan partisans that the Duke of Calabria had helped to establish.²⁵ All Pandolfo Petrucci's political wiles were tested by popular determination to keep hold of Montepulciano when he would have liked to use its return to Florence as a bargaining counter. Such fixations limited the room to manoeuvre of those who were elected to deal with wars and other crises in external relations.

If popular sentiments and prejudices might make a negotiated end to hostilities difficult, it need not mean that the *popolo* would be willing to face up to the financial consequences of their desires. The proverbial reluctance of the *popolo* to spend on external affairs was a real problem. It was no coincidence that popular governments tended not to have a network of resident envoys or an effective system of couriers to carry despatches. Even the Florentines under the Medici were heavily dependent on the couriers of the Sforza and

²⁵ See above, pp. 57–61.

on the communications network of their own merchants and bankers to keep the government in touch with Florentine ambassadors. The Genoese, never very enthusiastic about paying taxes in any case, were reluctant to vote large sums of money to pay for the prosecution of wars, particularly if they felt that the issue at stake was more the personal concern of the Doge than of the commune. Detailed budgets and strict accounting were required for any money they did grant. Although they were not blind to the difficulties this could cause, they could not bring themselves to raise large sums and leave the spending of them to the full discretion of those they placed in charge—who were often themselves reluctant to take on such a responsibility in any case.²⁶ Persuading the Great Council of Florence to vote enough money was a continual problem, that the election of Piero Soderini did not solve. (Nor did the deliberate refusal to pay taxes of some richer Florentines, who hoped thus to undermine the popular government.)²⁷

The problems of persuading a *popolo* to pay even for a war whose aims they whole-heartedly supported were illustrated by the difficulties faced by the Sienese in raising money for the defence of Montepulciano in the mid 1490s. For Pandolfo Petrucci and the insecurely-established Sienese oligarchy, popular support for the campaign could be used to extract better terms in negotiations with the Florentines. They could argue that they could not agree to return Montepulciano to Florence without endangering their own position in Siena, so if they were to agree to hand it back, they would require a substantial quid pro quo. On the other hand, continuing the campaign could itself constitute a threat to their position, because of the difficulties caused by the reluctance of the *popolo* to pay additional taxes to finance the military operations. Apparently, the Balia decided to resolve the dilemma by placing on the institutions of popular government the burden of raising the money needed: if you want the war, then you must find the money to pay for it. The Council of the People was summoned on several occasions during the winter of 1496–7 to hear reports about the pressing need for money for

²⁶ For the reluctance of the Genoese to raise large sums of money and their close supervision of expenditure, see Shaw, 'Counsel and consent in fifteenth-century Genoa', pp. 857–61.

²⁷ Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consiglio Maggiore', p. 185; Pesman Cooper, 'L'elezione di Pier Soderini', pp. 149–50.

Montepulciano. What the Balia got may well have been both less and more than they bargained for. No flow of funds was forthcoming, but the Council of the People (following the procedures of the government before the Balia became established as a *de facto* permanent body) authorized the Concistoro to appoint six men to make provisions to find money for 'the preservation of the town of Montepulciano in its devotion to your republic', a matter which they considered should be 'close to the heart of every good citizen'. These six decided that the Concistoro should join the commission of nine that had been handling the Montepulciano campaign. Money from the farm of some indirect taxes should be devoted to future expenses for the campaign (it was expressly forbidden to use the designated funds to pay for any expenses already incurred). All payments were to be handled by the commune's financial office, the Biccherna.²⁸ So, rather than new taxes being provided, existing revenues were re-assigned, and even they were not to be handled by the Balia. This was not an effective solution to the problem and the Balia appears to have abandoned the idea of turning to the Council of the People for help in raising money; they turned instead to their preferred, if generally unpopular, expedient of selling offices.²⁹

Popular governments casting about for badly-needed funds might be tempted to force the wealthier citizens to lend money, perhaps by detaining them in the government palace until they came up with the sums demanded of them. Discriminatory taxes might be imposed on those regarded as political enemies. Princes and oligarchies might have recourse to such expedients too, but the problem for popular governments was that this could raise up or exacerbate opposition not just to the regime but to the form of government among those who were the victims, or who feared their turn might be next. It would be easier for an oligarchic elite to raise money quickly. They would be likely to include some of those citizens best able to provide large sums of cash at short notice, and could if need be impose levies on themselves. Naturally, they would also arrange the terms on which the money would be repaid, or advantageous rates of interest, or both. They might also be readier than popular governments to offer such inducements to other citizens, perhaps readier to accept

²⁸ ASS, Balia 42, ff. 2r-3v.

²⁹ ASS, Balia 41, f. 169r-v.

that men might be more willing to lend to their government, even in an emergency, if they could get some profit from it.

Most of the extraordinary expenditure needed during wars would be for the payment of troops. Maintaining good relations with their military commanders was another aspect of external policy in which popular governments could be at a disadvantage. Raising the money to pay the troops was not the only problem—and soldiers could find it difficult enough to get regular payments from oligarchical governments or princes. Popular governments were reluctant to keep troops on unless they felt they really had to, so they were reluctant to maintain much of an army if they were at peace. They were unlikely to form stable relationships with particular commanders, to form personal bonds of mutual loyalty and respect that could reinforce the business arrangements of the military *condotte*.

This was a problem for republics in general, not just those ruled by popular governments—hence the saying ‘he who serves a republic serves no one’.³⁰ Venice solved this problem by being prepared to maintain her troops in peacetime and developing an effective organization to administer and provide for them, and by deliberately aiming to build up long-term relationships with the soldiers in her service, to make them feel that they were valued and respected, and that if they served loyally and well, they would be kept until their death, or if wounds or old age incapacitated them, that provision would be made for them and their families.³¹ In Florence, on the other hand, ‘a deeply rooted suspicion of soldiers was added to the normal oscillations of republican government’.³² Even Lorenzo de’ Medici could not form strong enough bonds with Florence’s commanders, including those Orsini to whom he was related, to keep them in Florentine service.³³ The difficulty that popular governments in particular had in attracting the loyalty of their military com-

³⁰ Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (London, 1974), p. 104.

³¹ M.E. Mallett and J.R. Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice c. 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 186–97.

³² Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, p. 105.

³³ Christine Shaw, ‘Lorenzo de’ Medici and Virginio Orsini’, in Peter Denley and Caroline Elam (eds), *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London, 1988), pp. 33–5; Christine Shaw, ‘Lorenzo de’ Medici and Niccolò Orsini’, in Gian Carlo Garfagnini (ed.), *Lorenzo de’ Medici: studi* (Florence, 1992), pp. 257–79.

manders was compounded by the fact that many of the *condottieri* of Renaissance Italy were from families of nobles, barons or *signori* who had little sympathy with the ethos of popular regimes. Simply serving such a government could be considered deleterious to the reputation of an established *condottiere*, in the eyes of some critics. Sigismondo Malatesta was said to have compromised his by serving 'a base *popolo* like Siena'.³⁴

Given the disadvantages they laboured under in managing their external relations, especially in time of war, it was easier for popular governments to survive if they stayed neutral in conflicts between other Italian states, and had a passive external policy. This they usually aspired to do. It did not mean that they would pass up the opportunity to extend their territories if there was fighting in their area, but they tended not to be active members of the leagues that linked varying combinations of states from different parts of Italy, or to participate in wars that did not have a bearing on their own immediate interests or the defence of their own territory.

Lucca was most successful in maintaining a low profile: that was crucial to her survival as an independent republic until the arrival of the French Revolutionary armies. The smallness of the Lucchese state, her position in Tuscany, the sense of vulnerability to attack from her neighbours, shaped the Lucchese sense of their priorities in their external policy. Following the recovery of their independence in 1369 after decades of domination by Pisa, 'They were obliged to stress their own insignificance, to return a soft answer, to avoid committing themselves to a course of action until they were sure what their neighbours' attitude was, and to avoid doing anything that might give offence to anyone.'³⁵

During the period when Paolo Guinigi was *signore* of Lucca, from 1400 to 1430, he tried to pursue much the same external policy, but it was more difficult for a *signore* to stay neutral; his failure to keep Lucca at peace was in large part responsible for his downfall.³⁶ There has been some disagreement about how passive the Lucchese wanted to be in their relations with other states, particularly with

³⁴ Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali*, p. 64.

³⁵ Christine Meek, *Lucca 1369–1400: Politics and Society in an Early Renaissance City-State* (Oxford, 1978), p. 119.

³⁶ Giuliano Lucarelli, *I Visconti di Milano e Lucca risorta a stato autonomo* (Lucca, 1984), pp. 97–145.

neighbouring Florence, in the fifteenth century, but the dispute is over the degree of their passivity, and how threatened they felt by Florentine ambitions to take over Lucca. It is agreed that they at least had more scope and inclination for autonomy than they would have in the sixteenth century.³⁷ Nevertheless, after peace had been made with Florence in 1438, and a fifty-year league with Florence in 1441, Lucca was not an active participant in the Italian leagues of the fifteenth century. When Florence was struggling to recover dominion over Pisa after 1494, the Lucchese did seize the opportunity to fish in troubled waters in the hopes of recovering territories, especially Pietrasanta, that had been lost long before, but despite the assistance given to the Pisans, Lucca was never officially at war with Florence.³⁸

Genoa, although not a primary participant in the system of alliances between Italian states in the fifteenth century, was more active than Lucca. The major Genoese intervention in Italian politics was support for the Angevin claimants to the throne of Naples against Alfonso d'Aragona. The course of this conflict had great influence on the internal politics of Genoa for decades. Most famously, Filippo Maria Visconti's denial to the Genoese of the fruits of their spectacular defeat of Alfonso's fleet off Ponza and their capture of the king himself in 1435—by insisting the king be sent to Milan where he was treated as an honoured guest and released without ransom, and ordering the Genoese to release their other prisoners and return their booty—was the direct cause of the revolt of the Genoese against their Visconti overlord. More generally, discontent with lack of success in the conflict, with the cost of the war in arming fleets and losses to merchants, or with the terms of treaties with Alfonso, weakened the position of several of the doges.³⁹

³⁷ Michele Luzzati, 'Politica di salvaguardia dell'autonomia lucchese nella seconda metà del secolo XV', in *Egemonia fiorentina ed autonomie locali nella Toscana nord-occidentale del primo Rinascimento: vita, arte, cultura* (Pistoia, 1978), p. 580; Bratchel, *Lucca 1430-1494*, pp. 6-7.

³⁸ Luzzati, 'Politica di salvaguardia dell'autonomia lucchese', pp. 558-74.

³⁹ The best succinct accounts of the interplay of domestic and external factors in the turbulent politics of Genoa during the first half of the fifteenth century are in Luca Borzani, Geo Pistarino and Franco Ragazz (eds), *Storia illustrata di Genova*, Vol. II, *Genova nel Quattrocento* (Genoa, 1993), by Enrico Basso, 'Antoniotto Adorno e la dominazione francese', pp. 289-304, and *idem*, 'Tommaso Campofregoso e la dominazione milanese', pp. 321-36, and Giustina Olgiati, 'L'età delle guerre civili', pp. 353-68. For the mid fifteenth century, see G. Olgiati, *Classis contra regem Aragonum*

The Genoese were drawn into this conflict with Alfonso d'Aragona because of their long-standing trade and shipping rivalry with his Catalan subjects, as well as a dispute with Alfonso over possession of the island of Corsica. His humiliating defeat off Ponza fuelled what has been described as Alfonso's 'obsessive desire to eliminate Genoa as a rival sea power in the Western Mediterranean'.⁴⁰ In earlier centuries, trading interests had drawn Genoa into rivalries with Pisa and Venice. While Pisa was a spent force in the fifteenth century, the Genoese were very much aware of Venetian competition, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean, but this did not draw them into direct participation in the wars in Lombardy between Milan and Venice. What brought Genoa into alliance with Milan and Florence in the 1450s was not so much concern about the consequences of Venetian dominance over Lombardy—although this was not a prospect they would relish—as Pietro Campofregoso's desire for external support.

Doges sought 'protection' from other powers, sometimes in the form of subsidies and troops, to bolster their own position in Genoa and Liguria. Pietro Campofregoso badgered Francesco Sforza and the Florentines to pay for an infantry guard which he insisted was essential to keep him in power. He needed money to pay for infantry, Pietro argued, because without infantry he could easily lose what reputation he had with the citizens and with his enemies.⁴¹ Giano Campofregoso, when he was Doge, had been prepared to ask even Alfonso d'Aragona to provide a substantial force of cavalry as well as infantry for his protection (and to pay pensions of 300 ducats a year to four Genoese citizens of Giano's choice)—especially, he argued, as alliance with Alfonso might well bring Genoa into a war.⁴² Doges rarely had a sufficiently secure hold on the city and its subject territory to be in any position to contemplate military adventures or an active diplomatic role in the affairs of Italy. If they did nourish any ambitions to cut a figure on the Italian stage, they had

(Genova, 1453–1454). *Organizzazione militare ed economica della spedizione navale contro Napoli* (Cagliari, 1990), pp. 11–215.

⁴⁰ Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, p. 300.

⁴¹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 408: copy Pietro Campofregoso to ?, 19 Jan. 1453, Genoa.

⁴² Giustina Olgiati, 'L'alleanza fallita: il tractato del 7 novembre 1447 tra Alfonso d'Aragona e Giano Campofregoso', *La storia dei Genovesi*, X (Genoa, 1990), pp. 331–2, 339–40.

to contend with the disinclination of the Genoese to engage actively in Italian politics. Although the doge was the military head of the republic he did not have enough resources at his command to pursue an active external policy without the support of the citizens, and the Genoese were not willing to pay for this. The Genoese would pay, and fight, to defend their trading and maritime interests—although they were not always prepared to do even that. Trade was the primary business of the Genoese, the lifeblood of the city, and for trade to flourish, they needed peace.

Not only the doges, but also their rivals, in the city or in exile, had different priorities. In order to do down their enemies, Genoese faction leaders were prepared even to encourage and foster the ambitions of those who had a claim to the *signoria* of Genoa, the king of France and the duke of Milan. There were always some discontented Genoese political exiles, and there was usually some power or other who had an interest in assisting them. Genoese exiles were among the most successful in Italy in attracting outside support in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁴³ The ambitions and rivalries of the Genoese factions and their leaders made Genoa one of the 'hotspots' of Italian politics. Those Genoese who were not involved in the contests of the factions were often unable to opt for the quiet life they would have preferred for themselves and their republic.

There was little peace for the popular governments of the Florentine republic during the periods of the exile of the Medici, either. Attempts by Piero de' Medici to return by force resulted in several campaigns against the city, which also came under threat from Cesare Borgia and his *condottieri*. The Florentines' determination to recover Pisa caused war in Tuscany for over a decade. Once they finally reconquered Pisa in 1509, they had only a brief respite before the regime's tenacious adherence to the traditional alliance with France brought the schismatic ecclesiastical council called by cardinals under the patronage of Louis XII to Pisa, in 1511. Reluctant hosts of the council as they were, the Florentines had still gravely offended Pope Julius II, who was determined to restore the Medici to the city. The Dieci di Balìa and the Eighty favoured a policy of trying to ward off the threat by buying the support of the Emperor Maximilian and the Spanish viceroy in Italy, Cardona, with the subsidies they desired.

⁴³ Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, pp. 172–202.

The majorities in the Great Council refused to abandon the French alliance or to agree to the payments. This enabled the Medici to confirm the support of the Emperor and Spanish troops by promising the money Maximilian and Cardona wanted, and sealed the fate of the popular government.⁴⁴

During the second period of popular government from 1527 to 1530, there was war throughout Italy in a crucial phase of the struggle between Charles V and Francis I. There was little question that as soon as the pope had extricated himself from his own difficulties and was in a position to bargain, he would be looking for support for efforts to bring his family back to Florence. Few supporters of the popular government could have had any illusions that they would be left in peace, but too many still clung to the tradition of alliance with France and were opposed to the very idea of the compromises and negotiations with other powers that might have saved Florence from the siege of 1530 and the imposition of the Medici principate.⁴⁵ Those who urged the necessity of trying to come to some agreement with the pope might be threatened with violence for even making the suggestion.⁴⁶

The popular government of Siena was not trammelled by a tradition of alliance to any power; its tradition, like that of the Lucchese, was a preference for neutrality. Like the Lucchese, the Siennese were quite prepared to stress how weak their state was, how little of a threat they posed to anyone. The many reasons why the Siennese preferred to stay neutral were set out in a letter from a Siennese citizen to Galeazzo Maria Sforza explaining why the Siennese councils were not giving their consent to a request from the duke, King Ferrante and the Florentines that the Siennese should join them in a league. Many citizens feared that this would involve them in a war, Antonio Lanti told the duke, which they did not want because the revenues of the commune were insufficient to pay for it, and there were many who could not afford the forced loans that would be needed to make up the shortfall. There were also fears that war would mean shortages of grain. All the leagues they had made in the past had brought great damage, and little honour to Siena; her

⁴⁴ Devonshire Jones, *Francesco Vettori*, pp. 49–54.

⁴⁵ Cecil Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic* (London, 1925), pp. 70–2, 100–1, 120–2, 142–75.

⁴⁶ Devonshire Jones, *Francesco Vettori*, p. 213.

territory had been ruined by soldiers and it had taken years to pay off the debts incurred. The councils had been discussing a proposal for a league with Florence for about twenty months, but again many citizens would not agree. 'Not being at enmity with any Italian power, they will not be harmed by any lord or community, and they want to be wished well and regarded as friends by all'.⁴⁷

That invitations to join others in a league should set the Sieneſe thinking about the consequences of war on their territory was natural enough. The principal reason any power might want Siena as an ally was the opportunity to make use of Sieneſe territory as a base for military operations and a source of supplies for troops, or to prevent others from using it as a base. Arguments about the weakness and vulnerability of Siena could be turned against them. Siena could not stay neutral in the war in Tuscany, King Alfonso warned in 1448. Siena was not among the great powers of Italy that could stand alone and defend themselves, and would be in peril if Alfonso and Florence made peace terms that did not include her.⁴⁸ Reluctant participation in campaigns against Florence in the 1440s and 1450s brought the Sieneſe little but trouble; more willing participation in the war against Florence in 1478–9 brought some territorial gains but these soon had to be relinquished. It also brought about the return of the exiles under the aegis of the Duke of Calabria, and the expulsion of the *Riformatori* from the government, thus putting in train the sequence of upheavals that would undermine the popular government.

When the Sieneſe did make a league with another power, they generally sought a commitment from their ally to defend Siena and her territory, but were not willing to commit themselves to sending troops elsewhere. It was not so much an ally they were looking for, as a protector. A potential 'protector', however, would have difficulty forming a lasting understanding with a government whose leading figures changed every two months, and would look to have a group of 'amici', 'friends' to help to deliver the Sieneſe side of the bargain. 'Friends' of other powers in a popular government had to be careful not to promise too much. If they had to work through the councils of a popular government, they could have difficulty delivering

⁴⁷ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 264: Antonio Lanti to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 11 Feb. 1466(7), Siena.

⁴⁸ ASS, Concistoro 492, f. 13r–v.

what a protector might want. King Alfonso had powerful 'friends' in Siena in the 1450s, but even when they resorted to intimidation and attempts to manipulate elections, they were unable to influence the political choices of the Siennese as they hoped to do. At that time Venice, the pope, Florence and the Duke of Milan were also trying through their 'friends' to influence the Siennese alignment in the war in Tuscany. The Venetians had on their side one of the richest men in Siena, Antonio Gori, who was among those most frequently called upon to serve on special commissions and Balie. But even when he was Captain of the People, he could not help the Venetian ambassador to prevail on the Council of the People to grant any of the assistance requested for Venice and her Neapolitan ally. The 'friends' of Florence and Francesco Sforza saw to that. Seven Venices and seven Kings of Aragon could not undo the work we have done, exulted the Milanese envoy.⁴⁹

After the unmasking of the pro-Neapolitan conspirators in 1456, it was the Milanese 'friends' who were the most influential group in Siennese politics for some years. The 'friend' that Francesco Sforza and his envoys regarded as their most important ally in Siena was Cristofano Gabrielli, who had played such a prominent role in bringing the conspirators to book. Cristofano could 'do what he wants here—or almost', the Milanese envoy, Nicodemo da Pontremoli, enthused in October 1456.⁵⁰ Even at what was probably the high point of Cristofano's influence in Siena, this was an over-optimistic assessment—and if it had been true, it would not have meant that Francesco Sforza could have got whatever he wanted from Siena. Cristofano and the other 'friends' would always put Siennese interests first, and would not push too hard against the wishes and prejudices of their fellow citizens. They did not act as agents for the interests of the Duke of Milan, and he may not really have expected them to. When he was recruiting 'friends' in Siena, Nicodemo told them that the duke understood them to be prudent and good citizens, and did not want them to be partisans.⁵¹

⁴⁹ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 255: Sceva da Corte to Francesco Sforza, 16, 19 Feb. 1452, Siena; *ibid.*, Sceva da Corte, Niccolo Arcimboldo and Giacomo Trivulzio to F. Sforza, 16 Feb. 1452, Siena.

⁵⁰ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 256: Nicodemo da Pontremoli to F. Sforza, 31 Oct. 1456, Siena.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: N. da Pontremoli to F. Sforza, 5 Feb. 1456, Siena.

When they felt threatened by Alfonso, Piccinino and the exiles, the Sieneese were pleased for it to be known that they were under Sforza's protection,⁵² but gratitude was about all that he got in return. He could not get his 'friends' to agree to press for concessions to individual exiles he recommended, or to give a *condotta* to Braccio Baglioni. (Nicodemo tried arguing to Cristofano Gabrielli that it would be to his advantage to have a captain 'given to him' by Sforza, but Cristofano was more concerned about the expense and what Braccio Baglioni's intentions would be.)⁵³ After Alfonso's death had caused Sieneese concern about the threat from their exiles to subside, the Milanese 'friends' lost some ground, and their influence became compromised when it was believed that Sforza backed Pius II's demands for the admission of the Gentiluomini to the regime. When Cristofano Gabrielli, shamefaced, apologized that the Sieneese had not agreed to send an envoy to Milan concerning a dispute with a neighbouring baron, Borso Sforza da Santa Fiora (a distant relative of the duke), he blamed the disturbance caused in the city by the pope's demands.⁵⁴ He and the other Milanese 'friends' also blamed the difficulty of managing the *popolo*, who had strong opinions on this matter.⁵⁵

Although individuals might take great pride in their association with the rulers and dignitaries of other states, as a matter of policy popular governments had a tendency to be suspicious of private contacts between their citizens and other governments or their representatives. During periods of political tension or external threat, legislation might be passed to control, even forbid, such contacts. Among the provisions made in 1439 in Siena to try to reduce dissension and suppress nascent factions was one forbidding any citizen to write about the business of the government, or defaming fellow citizens, 'to any lord, spiritual or temporal, prince, community, captain or other persons', without the permission of the Concistoro.⁵⁶ In the early 1450s, the 'friends' of Alfonso and Venice succeeded in having a decree passed, forbidding citizens to write to Francesco

⁵² Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, pp. 160–1.

⁵³ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 269: N. da Pontremoli to F. Sforza, 5 June 1457, Florence.

⁵⁴ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 260: Otto del Carretto to F. Sforza, 24 July 1460, Siena.

⁵⁵ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 261: N. da Pontremoli to F. Sforza, 23 Dec. 1460, Siena; Francesco Aringhieri to F. Sforza, 23 Dec. 1460, Siena; b. 262: Cristofano Gabrielli to Cicco Simonetta, 10 June 1461, Siena.

⁵⁶ ASS, Concistoro 441, f. 27r.

Sforza without permission: this, according to Nicodemo da Pontremoli, was aimed specifically at Lodovico Petroni, an assiduous correspondent of the duke.⁵⁷ Measures passed in August 1456 to clip the wings of those conspiring with Alfonso and Jacopo Piccinino included a prohibition on any citizen visiting any 'lord, prelate or ambassador' who might come to Siena, 'or holding any public or private negotiations with him' without the express written leave of the Concistoro. Thus, 'it will be the Signoria that will have the credit for everything, as it should, and not private individuals.'⁵⁸ In the 1430s, the General Council of Lucca repeatedly decreed that all correspondence between private citizens and princes or captains had to be reported to the Anziani.⁵⁹ But it was impossible to enforce such policies for long. There were too many reasons for private citizens of one state to seek to form personal links with the governments of other states: trade and financial links and their attendant legal disputes, the search for official posts, or ecclesiastical benefices, or advantageous marriages. Private contacts could be useful for the transaction of official business too, to test the waters, sound out opinion or facilitate negotiations. Choices of ambassadors or other envoys were often made on the basis of the reputation and contacts that individuals had outside their own states.

However useful the private contacts of citizens with public figures elsewhere might be, policies were supposed to be decided by the official bodies, committees and commissions and councils. The restricted, longer-serving commissions with extraordinary powers which were often appointed by popular governments to handle important matters of external relations, could not only provide more effective handling of the business for their own government. They could also provide a more stable interlocutor for the other parties to negotiations than the usual short-lived executive committees could do. Better still, from the viewpoint of the other parties, if there were an individual or a restricted group within the government with whom a more personal understanding could be reached, with whom, perhaps, confidential terms or secret agreements could be reached.

⁵⁷ ASMi, ASforzesco, b. 267: N. da Pontremoli to F. Sforza, 7 Nov. 1454, Florence.

⁵⁸ ASS, Concistoro 2118, ff. 108v–109r (published in Shaw, 'Provisions following "Proposte generali"', p. 134).

⁵⁹ Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494*, p. 42.

Piero Soderini's election as Gonfaloniere for life was in part a response to external pressure on the Florentines to change their form of government so that it would be one 'on which one can rely', as the Duke of Ferrara put it.⁶⁰ Pandolfo Petrucci had complained that he did not like dealing with such a broadly-based government: he could not confide in them, nor get help when he needed it.⁶¹ What Pandolfo Petrucci might think of them was of much less concern to the Florentines than the menaces of Cesare Borgia. In 1501, he specified three options: restore the Medici, put the government in the hands of a small group, or if the present regime was maintained, weed out some undesirable elements.⁶² The following year he made clear what his objection was. 'I want to know whom I shall be dealing with', he said. 'I do not like this government and I cannot trust it; you need to change it, and give me some assurance that you will observe what you promise me'.⁶³ His comments carried still more weight because the King of France also wanted a change in the government of Florence. The news of Piero Soderini's election was greeted with pleasure by Louis XII. Cardinal d'Amboise, Louis's chief minister, described it as the beginning of reform to a better form of government.⁶⁴

The presence of 'friends' of another power among their citizens could be a matter of concern to popular governments, not only because of fears that they might unduly influence decisions or pass on information that should be kept secret, but also because there could be fears that they might try to exploit their influential connections to support a change in the form of government. Those who sought out and fostered such connections could be suspected of 'ambition', in the sense of a desire to have more than one's share of influence and office, which was regarded by those who cherished 'aequalitas', the egalitarian values of popular government, as a moral failing. 'Republics cannot be given good counsel by great and powerful citizens', a speaker in a Florentine *pratica* during the last

⁶⁰ Pesman Cooper, 'L'elezione di Pier Soderini', p. 159.

⁶¹ ASF, X di Balìa, Resp. 60, cc. 277-8: Francesco Pepi to Signoria of Florence, 1 Mar. 1500(1), Siena.

⁶² Sergio Bertelli, 'Machiavelli e la politica estera fiorentina', in Myron P. Gilmore (ed.), *Studies on Machiavelli* (Florence, 1972), p. 48.

⁶³ Machiavelli, *Legazioni e commissarie*, I, pp. 262-3: Francesco Soderini to Signoria of Florence, 26 June 1502, Urbino.

⁶⁴ Bertelli, "'Uno magistrato per a tempo lungho o uno dogie'", p. 483.

Republic argued, 'because their ambition, the private friendships with princes which they improperly maintain, the desire to satisfy this person and that, the desire that everything should be known to and depend on them, their personal avarice, having their wealth dispersed here and there, which makes them very cautious . . . can easily pervert their judgment.'⁶⁵ Men who regarded the desire to be esteemed and honoured by their fellow citizens as a natural and laudable desire for glory, and would think it fitting that that esteem should be recognized by office and influence in government,⁶⁶ would be the kind of men who would be inclined to value recognition as being worthy of consideration as a 'friend' of another state.

Fostering 'friends' in a state with a popular government might encourage the development of an oligarchically-inclined group. For the cabal of five men—Antonio Bichi, Niccolo Borghesi, Leonardo Bellanti, and Giacoppo and Pandolfo Petrucci—who aspired to dominate the government of Siena in the early 1490s and to reform it to entrench the power of the Balìa, the support of Lorenzo de' Medici and then of Piero de' Medici was a very important element in their calculations. Some aspects of the support they hoped for, like loans on favourable terms to help prop up the precarious finances of the Siennese government, they did not necessarily want to be known. Similarly, they had to be careful in how they presented agreements with the Medici about military *condotte*. If they could present the Florentines as assuming some of the burden of the defence of Siena, their friendship with the Medici could be presented as an asset that brought benefit to their fellow citizens; if they were thought to be bringing about the hiring of more troops than the Siennese needed or could afford their motives might well be considered suspect.⁶⁷ Pandolfo Petrucci might wonder whether it might not be preferable to keep 'a foot in two stirrups' by cultivating the friendship of Lodovico Sforza as well.⁶⁸ Leonardo Bellanti, after he had been flattered by Pope Alexander VI when he was a member of the Siennese embassy that went to swear obedience to the new pope,

⁶⁵ A. Anzilotti, *La crisi costituzionale della repubblica fiorentina* (Florence, 1912), pp. 90–1.

⁶⁶ Varotti, *Gloria e ambizione politica*, especially pp. 205–91.

⁶⁷ Shaw, 'Politics and institutional innovation', 104 (1997), pp. 244–62.

⁶⁸ ASF, MAP 19, 632: Alessandro Braccesi to Piero de' Medici, 13 Sept. 1494, Siena.

came back arguing the advantages of a papal alliance.⁶⁹ But it was their connection with the Medici that was crucial to them. It was no coincidence that the exile of the Medici heralded the end of the five acting as a concerted group. Giacoppo Petrucci, who claimed that under the protection of Lorenzo de' Medici 'he had made Siena tremble',⁷⁰ and was particularly insistent on the need for Piero de' Medici's support, seems to have retired, voluntarily or not, from playing a leading role in Siennese political life after the fall of Piero.

While they did make an effort to meet at least some of the incessant demands for support, loans and favours from their 'friends' in Siena, Lorenzo and Piero de' Medici do not seem to have had any part in suggesting or encouraging the reforms of the government that their 'friends' were trying to introduce to consolidate their position. Nor was Francesco Sforza a sponsor of the reforms that his Siennese 'friends' introduced in the mid-1450s. In April 1457 they did ask the Milanese envoy Nicodemo da Pontremoli (who was shuttling between Florence and Siena) to help sort out what he termed their 'error' in 'confining the government to a *balia generale* [the *Balia maggiore*] of two hundred citizens of their choice,⁷¹ by which they have made many other worthy citizens desperate.' He agreed to stay and advise, so that the duke would get the credit and the gratitude of the Siennese.⁷² The reform brought nearly all the members of the Council of the People into the *Balia maggiore*, so Nicodemo evidently had no reason to believe that the duke favoured a more oligarchical government for Siena. King Alfonso in the early 1450s might have welcomed a more oligarchical form of government for Siena—if his 'friends' had been the oligarchs in control. His grandson Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, might have thought it would be better if Siena had a government more like that of the Sixteen in Bologna, but when he intervened in Siennese internal politics it was to restore exiles and ammoniti regarded as partisans of Naples (although not all of them proved to be so), and to support the exile of those Riformatori regarded as the enemies of Naples, not to change the form of government.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 164, 165, 171, 172: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 25, 28 Oct., 23, 28 Nov. 1492, Siena.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 83: A. Braccesi to P. de' Medici, 30 Apr. 1492, Siena.

⁷¹ 'reducto lo stato in una balia generale de docento cittadini a loro modo'.

⁷² ASMī, ASforzesco, b. 269: Nicodemo da Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza, 14 Apr. 1457, Florence.

For powers seeking the alliance of, or influence over, Genoa when the republic was independent, searching out a group of ‘friends’ was of limited use if the Doge was hostile. On the other hand, doges could not do very much without the consent and support of the councils, where influential individuals like Battista da Goano could hold great sway. Nor could the noble clans who dominated the Riviere and the mountains be left out of the account. Dealing with the government of Genoa was a complex and often frustrating business, but pressure to change it—short of subjecting Genoa to the *signoria* of another power—was limited to backing a rival candidate for the dogeship. When Genoa was subject to the King of France from 1458 to 1461, no attempt was made to reform the councils, and the Visconti and Sforza also chose to work with what there was rather than risk stirring up opposition by changing it.⁷³

The attitude of other powers to popular governments was analogous to the attitudes of powers seeking influence over the *signori* of the Romagna. The king of Naples, the duke of Milan, the republics of Venice and Florence with their ‘mixed governments’ combining varying measures of popular government and oligarchy, all competed to support the *signori* or their dynastic rivals. For all their pride in their republican traditions, Florence and Venice were as willing as the king or duke to prop up faltering *signorie* if it suited their own interests to do so. When Italian powers in the fifteenth century intervened directly in the affairs of another state, they would be supporting allies, displacing enemies, not seeking to alter the system of government.

Should Cesare Borgia’s demands, backed by threats, that the Florentines should reform their government be regarded as an exception to this rule, or should they be regarded as a sign of changing times? That is to say, were the difficulties that popular governments

⁷³ There was much more interference in the Riviere, which the Genoese thought of as subject to the civic government, while the French and the Dukes of Milan were inclined to regard them as being directly subject to them. There is no published account of this period of French domination over Genoa. For the government of Genoa under the Visconti and the Sforza, see Riccardo Musso, ‘Le istituzioni ducali dello “Stato di Genova” durante la signoria di Filippo Maria Visconti (1421–1435)’, in Luisa Chiappa Mauri, Laura De Angelis Cappabianca and Patrizia Mainoni (eds), *L’età dei Visconti: il dominio di Milano fra XIII e XV secolo* (Milan, 1993), pp. 65–111, and *idem*, ‘“El stato nostro de Zenoa”. Aspetti istituzionali della prima dominazione sforzesca su Genova (1464–78)’, in *Serta antiqua et mediaevalia*, V, *Società e istituzioni del Medioevo ligure* (Rome, 2001), pp. 199–236.

had in dealing with wars intensified by the duration and scale of the Italian wars, and by the involvement of France, Spain and the Emperor? Were the princes from outside Italy, their commanders and their agents, more ready overtly to support and encourage oligarchies and *signori*?

Intervention in and invasion of Italy by foreign powers helped to create the circumstances in which popular government came into being in Florence both in 1494 and in 1527. Piero de' Medici's inept negotiations with Charles VIII as the French king approached Florence in 1494, his agreeing to hand over important fortresses to the French without having any mandate from the Florentine government to make such terms, brought discontent with the Medicean regime to a head, and led to the exile of Piero and his family. Spiritually, the significance attributed by Savonarola to the French invasion in his sermons and prophecies of castigation and renewal, strengthened the conviction of his followers that their popular government had God's blessing. Maintaining their alliance with the French king became something of a shibboleth for supporters of the popular government, even after Savonarola's fall and execution. Both Charles VIII and Louis XII were prepared to be their ally, although there was no real confidence between the French and the Florentines at this time. The French made difficulties over the return of the fortresses that Piero de' Medici had handed over to them, and prevaricated over assisting Florence to recover Pisa. Louis XII's main interest in his dealings with the Florentines was to get money from them: he expected any Italians who wanted his alliance or protection to pay for the privilege.⁷⁴ When informed by the Florentine ambassador in November 1505 that Spanish troops had entered Pisa, Louis riposted that this would not have happened if the Florentines had paid the money they owed him, because then they could have had French troops to help them. (Everybody else had paid up, he remarked, except for Pandolfo Petrucci, to whom he had sent a man to remind him of his debts, and Gianpaolo Baglioni.)⁷⁵ Louis had wanted a change in the government, and had welcomed the election of Piero Soderini

⁷⁴ Christine Shaw, 'The role of Milan in the Italian state system under Louis XII', in Letizia Arcangeli (ed.), *Milano e Luigi XII: ricerche sul primo dominio francese in Lombardia (1499-1512)* (Milan, 2002), pp. 32-5.

⁷⁵ A. Desjardins and G. Canestrini, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, 6 vols (Paris, 1859-86) (*Documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France*), II, pp. 144-5: Francesco Pandolfini to X di Balìa of Florence, 10 Nov. 1505, Blois.

as Gonfaloniere for life because he had thought that would make it easier to get what he wanted from Florence, but he had been disappointed.

The Florentine popular government paid dearly for their alliance with Louis, and not just financially. Louis forced them to be the unwilling hosts of the schismatic ecclesiastical council that opened proceedings in Pisa (by then back under Florentine rule) in 1511, thus bringing down on the Florentines the wrath of Pope Julius II, and the expedition by the pope and his Spanish allies against Florence in 1512. After the French victory over the forces of the Holy League at Ravenna in April 1512, the Florentines had renewed their alliance with the French. As French fortunes rapidly declined, the Florentines tried to balance this unfortunate act by seeking an alliance with King Ferdinand of Spain, but they hesitated too long.⁷⁶ Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici's position as papal legate and the Medici's willingness to agree to pay the subsidy for the Spanish troops that was so desperately needed, helped to keep the Spanish viceroy Cardona obedient to his orders from Ferdinand to 'change the government of the Florentine state, putting the Medici in'.⁷⁷ His obligations to his allies under the terms of the Holy League, not any animus against the popular government as such, lay behind Ferdinand's orders.⁷⁸ Some Florentines believed that if Cardona had been offered a satisfactory sum for himself and his troops he would have withdrawn from the enterprise.⁷⁹ Nevertheless it was the presence of the Spanish troops outside Florence that brought about the deposition of Piero Soderini and agreement that the Medici could return to Florence as private citizens, and the entry of some of those troops into Florence two weeks later that enabled the supporters of the Medici to organize the Parlamento that marked the demise of the popular government.

It was the travails of Clement VII, culminating in the Sack of Rome, that prepared the ground for the expulsion of the Medici and the revival of popular government in 1527. Loyalty to the tradition of alliance with France influenced the decision of the Florentines

⁷⁶ Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini* (London, 1967), pp. 29–34.

⁷⁷ Baron de Terrateig, *Política en Italia del Rey Católico 1507–1516: Correspondencia inédita con el embajador Vich*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1963), II, p. 224: Ferdinand to Jerónimo de Vich, 22 July 1512, Burgos.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 324–7.

⁷⁹ Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, Book X, Chaps. 2–4.

to stay in the League of Cognac, thus committing themselves to support the disastrous French attempt to reconquer the kingdom of Naples in 1528. Once again, the Florentines paid for the stubborn adherence of a popular government to a French alliance at a time when the French were being routed out of Italy: defeat in Naples was followed by a decisive defeat for the French army in Lombardy. Once again, tardily and hesitantly, the Florentines considered seeking an understanding with the King of Spain, who was now the Emperor Charles V, and once again the Medici were able to gain the support of Spanish troops to force their return to Florence and a change of government. By the Treaty of Barcelona, agreed in June 1529, Charles agreed to secure the restoration of the Medici to the dignity and power in the government of Florence 'which they had before they were last ejected'.⁸⁰ Soon afterwards, in the Treaty of Cambrai, Francis I agreed not to undertake any further interventions against the Emperor in Italy. All the repeated assurances of protection that the king and his ministers had given to the Florentines resulted only in a stipulation that they would be included in the peace if they settled their differences with Charles within four months.⁸¹

Even before the Treaty of Barcelona, there had been plans that the Viceroy of Naples, the Prince of Orange, should lead an expedition against Florence to bring the city under the obedience of the pope; or if no agreement was reached between Charles and Clement to force the Florentines to pay a large sum, perhaps two or three hundred thousand ducats, for the privilege of being left alone with their government unchanged; or preferably, to induce them to accept a garrison of Imperial troops. Even after the treaty with the pope, Charles had been prepared to settle for money from Florence.⁸² But the Emperor insisted that if the Florentines wanted an agreement with him, they must also negotiate with the pope, and this they refused to do.⁸³ As the Florentines dithered, Charles was being persuaded by his advisers of the advantages of an expedition against Florence: confirming the friendship of the pope, the opportunity to get some money (naturally), the chance for the Prince of Orange to

⁸⁰ Rubinstein, 'Dalla repubblica al principato', pp. 167–8.

⁸¹ Giuseppe de Leva, *Storia documentata di Carlo V in correlazione all'Italia*, 5 vols (Venice, 1863–94), II, pp. 543–4; Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic*, pp. 142–3.

⁸² Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic*, pp. 144, 159.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 359: Charles V to Gattinara, 2 Sept. 1529, Gavi.

gain in reputation, and not leaving an enemy state in the heart of Italy.⁸⁴ The restoration of the Medici to Florence could be viewed as a means to several ends, none of them being the deliberate eradication of an unacceptable form of popular government.

But Charles V did also have a personal stake in how Florence would be governed, because of the betrothal, under the terms of the Treaty of Barcelona, of his natural daughter Margaret to Alessandro de' Medici. By the terms of the surrender to the Imperial army in August 1530 after ten months of siege, Charles himself was to settle the new form of government for Florence. His decree, published in July 1531, declared that the republic of Florence would be much better governed by a regime in which one man was in charge, than by one in which affairs were dealt with by a popular government.⁸⁵ Since the Medici family had been 'like the head of the government' before their expulsion, the Emperor had decided that his future son-in-law Alessandro should be 'head' ('caput') of the government of the republic of Florence, and his heirs after him.⁸⁶ This imprecision in describing the status of Alessandro was said to have been suggested by Clement: Charles, it was thought, would have preferred to declare Alessandro 'prince' of Florence. Although Charles left the details of the form of government to be settled by the pope and the Florentines, he backed up the position of the Medici by declaring that any violation of his decree would be considered an act of rebellion against the Empire.⁸⁷

The Genoese began the sixteenth century as subjects of the King of France, having submitted to Louis XII in October 1499 after his army had conquered the duchy of Milan. Their submission to the king had been regulated by a convention; Louis had agreed to most of the terms the Genoese had asked for, but made some reservations and qualifications to protect powers of discretion he regarded as intrinsic to his sovereignty.⁸⁸ Where the Genoese had petitioned,

⁸⁴ Karl Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V*, 3 vols (Leipzig, 1844–6), I, pp. 321–2: Louis de Praet to Charles V, 30 July, 5 Aug. 1529, Rome.

⁸⁵ 'sub huiusmodi regimine et magistratu, in quo sit unus cui eius praecipua cura incumbat, longe melius et felicius regatur et gubernetur, quam ubi res ad populares magistratus defertur': Rubinstein, 'Dalla repubblica al principato', p. 168.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–71.

⁸⁸ Pélissier, 'Documents pour l'histoire de l'établissement de la domination française a Gênes', pp. 477–500.

for example, that the governor would administer the city 'together with, and with the counsel and authority of' the Anziani,⁸⁹ the king granted that the governor or his representative should 'rule and govern with the council of the Anziani, as is customary, saving in all things the authority of the King's majesty, as is customary.'⁹⁰ Louis certainly regarded the power to grant lands in Genoese territory to those he favoured as being within his prerogative, but the favour he showed to some noble clans, particularly the Fieschi, upset the equilibrium between nobles and *popolari*. The uprising of the *popolari* in 1506 was blamed by them on the arrogance of the nobility and they repeatedly declared their loyalty to the king.⁹¹ The lieutenant of the French governor sided with the *popolari*, because he had been bribed, according to the nobles, who blamed the revolt on the misgovernment and rapacity of French officials.⁹² Nevertheless, Louis took the side of the nobles, refused to accept the protestations of loyalty by the popular government and in January 1507 decided to declare the Genoese rebels. What had particularly aroused his ire was not the actions of the popular government inside Genoa, so much as their refusal to hand over to the governor the territory that they had taken by force in the Riviere from the Fieschi and other nobles, and a report that they had offered the lordship of Genoa to King Ferdinand of Spain.⁹³

After Louis had come in person to conquer the city, the terms he had agreed with the Genoese in 1499 were publicly torn up during the ceremony in May 1507 at which they renewed their oath of fidelity to him. The king then granted a new set of privileges, which modified the earlier ones. It was expressly stated, for instance, that the Anziani could not deliberate or decide on anything without the governor or his lieutenant being present.⁹⁴ Subsequently, French

⁸⁹ 'una cum et de consilio et auctoritate Magnifico Dominorum Antianorum'.

⁹⁰ 'cum consilio Antianorum regat et gubernet, prout fieri consuevit, salva in omnibus auctoritate Regiae Majestatis, ut est consuetum': Pélissier, 'Documents pour l'histoire de l'établissement de la domination française a Gênes', p. 484.

⁹¹ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', pp. 424–6: Anziani to Governor Ravenstein, 21 July 1506; pp. 431–40: instructions to Nicolò Oderico, going as ambassador to Louis XII, 6 Aug. 1506; pp. 457–70: instruction to two new ambassadors going to France, 12 Nov. 1506.

⁹² Pélissier, 'Documents pour l'histoire de l'établissement de la domination française a Gênes', pp. 534–9.

⁹³ Pandiani, 'Un anno di storia genovese', p. 185.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 533–50: clause concerning the Anziani, p. 538.

officials became more obtrusive in their interventions in the government of the city, particularly in the administration of justice. They were not setting out to alter the political institutions of Genoa, but by asserting royal powers and prerogatives they were bypassing and overriding them, provoking vigorous protests from the Genoese but not another revolt.⁹⁵

When the French were driven from Italy in 1512, Genoa returned to government under a doge. On the reconquest of the duchy of Milan in 1515 by Francis I, Doge Ottaviano Campofregoso submitted Genoa to the new king, but stayed on as governor, rather than doge. This new act of submission to the French brought little change to the internal government of Genoa, and Francis did not press for any. He did expect money from the Genoese, and when he was told that they could not afford this, insisted that if they wanted his friendship, they would have to pay for it, as his other subjects did. The king was disappointed in his demands for money,⁹⁶ and the Genoese also got little benefit from the arrangement. In 1522 the city was subjected to a dreadful sack by Imperial troops. This brought an Imperial ambassador, not governor, to the city, and a new doge, Antoniotto Adorno.

Charles V and his advisers regarded Genoa as strategically important for his dominions, 'the gate and key to Italy from Spain and from Spain to Italy', as Ferrante Gonzaga described it,⁹⁷ and Genoese bankers were already beginning to assume their vital role in providing the Emperor with much-needed advances on tax revenues. How best to secure the allegiance of Genoa was an issue that would keep returning to his agenda. Discussions about the reform of the government of Genoa, for the 'union' of nobles and *popolari*, were regarded by the Imperial ambassador, the Spaniard Lope de Soria, with some suspicion. He was concerned that the 'union', if it meant that 'all will be equal in offices and the government' would lead to a revival of factionalism and political violence. 'If the government is in the hands of many men, of differing opinions, I do not know what security Your Majesty could have that they would serve you loyally in case of need'. There had to be someone at the head of the government, either a doge, or a direct representative of the

⁹⁵ Pacini, *I presupposti politici del "secolo dei genovesi"*, pp. 60–78.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 84–6.

⁹⁷ Federico Chabod, *Storia di Milano nell'epoca di Carlo V* (Milan, 1971), p. 214.

Emperor.⁹⁸ If the reform went ahead, he believed that the Genoese would choose to be neutral between Charles V and Francis I. To avoid this happening, he believed that Charles needed to secure the main fortress in Genoa, the Castelletto, and the galleys of the Genoese, and appoint a governor.⁹⁹

In August 1527, the French recaptured Genoa with the help of the galleys of Andrea Doria, and the doge was replaced by a governor, the Milanese Teodoro Trivulzio. The Genoese considered the expediency of offering Francis some money to buy his approval of reform, but Trivulzio told them that they could not have a better government than that of the king. As the Genoese persisted in discussing reform, Trivulzio continued to criticize the proposals in his letters to the king and to those Genoese involved in working out the proposals but had the tact to hold his peace publicly, so as not to arouse the hostility of the Genoese against the French. The draft of the reform drawn up in April 1528 included the important functions to be attributed to the governor of the king.¹⁰⁰ It was only after Andrea Doria's switch from the service of Francis to that of Charles V, and the subsequent revolt against French rule stimulated by Doria and supported by his fleet of galleys, that the reform of the government was finally brought about. In the terms he had made with Charles V, Doria had secured the Emperor's agreement that the city would 'live as a republic', and would enjoy his protection without being under any obligation to pay for it.¹⁰¹

For the next twenty years and more, Andrea Doria acted as the guarantor that the Genoese would stay loyal to Charles, and that he would get what he needed from them. For some of Charles's servants this was not guarantee enough, especially as Doria, while retaining his position as Charles V's Admiral, became old and frail. This concern was intensified by the conspiracy of Gian Luigi Fieschi in January 1547. Although it ended in Fieschi's death by drowning when he lost his footing as he passed from one galley to another in the harbour, it had also brought the death of Andrea Doria's prospective

⁹⁸ Pacini, *I presupposti politici del "secolo dei genovesi"*, p. 233.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 249, 254–5, 259.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 279–80; 'Documenti di storia italiana dall'anno 1522 al 1530 che fanno seguito ai pubblicati da Giuseppe Molini nel 1836–37', *Archivio storico italiano*, *Appendice*, 1 (1842–44), Appendix 9, pp. 431–3: Teodoro Trivulzio to ?, May 1528.

¹⁰¹ Carlo Bornate, 'I negoziati per attirare Andrea D'Oria al servizio di Carlo V', *Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria*, 18 (1942), Doc. II, pp. 74–5.

political heir, his nephew Gianantonio. Charles V favoured taking the direct rule of Genoa himself, arguing that it would be a guarantee against the Genoese falling under the tyranny of the French, or Andrea Doria or 'devotees and servants' of the Emperor (he did not refer to them as his 'friends') 'being subject to the passion of the populace',¹⁰² with peril to their lives and their property. Sooner or later, he believed, Genoa would belong either to him or to the King of France. Nevertheless, while ordering the Imperial ambassador Gomez Suarez de Figueroa to sound out the Imperial partisans in Genoa, using these arguments, Charles ordered that if they reacted unfavourably, Figueroa was not to push the matter, but to let it be understood that Charles wanted Genoa to be governed as a republic.¹⁰³

Figueroa advised against Charles assuming direct rule, because the Genoese were much attached to their *libertà*,¹⁰⁴ and it would cause the Emperor great expense, as very little of the public revenues would be available to him. The aim of securing the fealty of the Genoese could be best accomplished by respecting the existing constitutional arrangements. He did, however, recommend that there could be a fortress under Charles' command, with a garrison of 500 men, and a governor appointed by Charles to handle all judicial matters except civil and mercantile cases.¹⁰⁵ (That it was unlikely that the Genoese would have regarded this as *libertà* does not seem to have occurred to him.) Ferrante Gonzaga, the governor of Milan, backed Figueroa's suggestion that there should be a garrison under the command of an Imperial partisan, with Agostino Spinola as their favoured candidate. Backed by this force, Spinola would be able to bend the citizens to do as Charles V wanted, Gonzaga argued, but the city would be contented to keep its existing form of government, Charles V would not incur any odium, and the Genoese would not look to a change of government or of allegiance to better their lot. A garrison under a loyal Genoese commander could fulfil the same function as a fortress.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² 'sotopuestos a la passion popular'.

¹⁰³ 'Documenti ispano-genovesi dell'Archivio di Simancas', eds Massimiliano Spinola, L.T. Belgrano and Francesco Podestà, *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, 8 (1868), pp. 55–7; Charles V to Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, 14 Jan. 1547.

¹⁰⁴ 'hazen mucho caso desta su libertad'.

¹⁰⁵ 'Documenti ispano-genovesi dell'Archivio di Simancas', pp. 101–3; G. Suarez de Figueroa to Charles V, 30 Jan. 1547.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–3; Ferrante Gonzaga to Charles V, 9 Jan. 1547.

One major problem with this suggestion was that Andrea Doria would not be prepared to see Agostino Spinola, who longed to be regarded as the chief Imperial partisan in Genoa, holding such a command. He also advised against Charles assuming the direct rule of the city. The Emperor did decide to give up this idea, for the moment anyway. Doria himself suggested it might be desirable to have some infantry in the city, in case reforms that he was proposing as the best way to keep Genoa as a stable and reliable ally should arouse opposition among the *popolo*.¹⁰⁷ No drafts or records of debates about the proposed reforms discussed at this time survive—Figueroa was told that the intention was to reduce the numbers of those involved in government and reduce the size of the councils, ‘because it is difficult for so many to agree among themselves and decide what has to be done’. According to Adamo Centurione (Andrea Doria’s son-in-law) the Great Council would be reduced in number from four hundred to two hundred, fewer if possible, ‘because in this way authority would be taken from the lower ranks, and that of the Signoria and of worthy men and gentlemen would be increased’.¹⁰⁸ Members of the councils would be elected and not appointed by lot. Figueroa did not believe these reforms would be sufficient, without a garrison to back them up.¹⁰⁹

The intention, so Ferrante Gonzaga was told by Francesco Grimaldi, was to reduce the number of citizens in the *reggimento* to a hundred or a hundred and fifty.¹¹⁰ It is not clear if Andrea Doria and his circle really were considering such a drastic oligarchical change in government. A commission of eight began discussing reforms in May; their work was kept very secret. When word of their discussions began to spread in the city, a deputation of *artigiani* went to see the Signoria and Andrea Doria, to warn that they had heard of proposed reforms ‘to their prejudice’, and that the government should be careful not to do anything that might cause trouble.¹¹¹ Charles V and his advisers grew restless at the delay in implementing the

¹⁰⁷ Pacini, *La Genova di Andrea Doria*, pp. 626–7.

¹⁰⁸ ‘por que desta manera se quita el auctoridad a la gente baxa, y se augmenta a la Señoria, y a la gente de bien y gentiles hombres’.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Documenti ispano-genovesi dell’Archivio di Simancas’, pp. 112–6; G. Suarez de Figueroa to Charles V, 10 Feb. 1547.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–6; Ferrante Gonzaga to Charles V, 14 Feb. 1547.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173; G. Suarez de Figueroa to Charles V, 16 Aug. 1547.

promised reforms; but the news that they were finally to be implemented did not please Ferrante Gonzaga. He had urged the need for a garrison, and a fortress, and predicted that Andrea Doria would claim that reducing the numbers in the councils would provide a sufficient guarantee for Charles and that there would be no need for a fortress. 'I consider that it would not be good to let this type of government get under way', he wrote to Charles's chief minister, Granvelle, advising that the Emperor should send to Andrea Doria to say that he 'did not regard this government as lasting', and press him to agree to the construction of a fortress, to be built by the Genoese and then given to Charles.¹¹² While Charles would no doubt have welcomed this, he had perforce to recognize that no fortress could be built without Andrea Doria's consent, so he declared he would agree to Doria's proposal of a reduction of the numbers involved in government and the establishment of a guard of 800 men, and he would accept Doria's objection to the appointment of Agostino Spinola. But this would not be enough to secure Genoa and forestall future trouble: Doria must work to have the fortress accepted.¹¹³

After all this, the reforms that were finally implemented were not as the Emperor and his men had been told they would be. They were much less radical, and did not reduce the size of the *reggimento*, but rather adjusted the balance between the 'old' and 'new' nobles a little in favour of the 'old'.¹¹⁴ The Genoese can have been under no illusion that Charles would find these sufficient. Under continued pressure to consent to a fortress, Andrea Doria again suggested narrowing the base of the regime in Genoa. But this was still regarded as inadequate. Ferrante Gonzaga argued that an oligarchical reform would just cause trouble from those who would find themselves excluded.¹¹⁵ The visit of Charles's son, Philip of Spain, to Genoa in December 1548 seemed to the prince a good opportunity to force a decision on the fortress, but Andrea Doria continued to insist that,

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200: Ferrante Gonzaga to Nicolas Perronet de Granvelle, 13 Oct. 1547, Piacenza.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 202–6: Charles V to G. Suarez de Figueroa, 27 Oct. 1547.

¹¹⁴ Pacini, *Le Genova di Andrea Doria*, pp. 642–7.

¹¹⁵ 'Documenti ispano-genovesi dell'Archivio di Simancas', p. 236: Ferrante Gonzaga to Charles V, 13 June 1548, Milan.

rather than guarantee stability as it was supposed to do, the construction of a fortress would cause an uprising in Genoa, and to propose reforms of the government instead. Philip was advised by Figueroa, Gonzaga and the Duke of Alba that he should not encourage but impede further reform, because it would only serve to give the Genoese an excuse to argue there was no need for a fortress.¹¹⁶ Finally, Charles accepted that no conclusion could be reached in favour of building a fortress so long as Andrea Doria was alive. In the event, there was to be no fortress, and no further oligarchic reform.

Lucca had nothing like the strategic importance for the Habsburgs that Genoa had, and the Lucchese eventually succeeded in establishing themselves under the imperial aegis without being forced to lose their independence or change their 'governo popolare'. While Louis XII held Milan and Genoa, the Lucchese sought the protection of the French. Naturally, this had to be paid for, but occasionally they did receive something for their money. When the Florentines were reported to be planning to attack Lucca, Cardinal d'Amboise warned them off, saying the Lucchese were allies of the king 'and paid their money to be defended'.¹¹⁷ In response to an approach from the Emperor Maximilian, the Lucchese also paid out 9,000 ducats (he had asked for 12,000) for confirmation of privileges granted by earlier emperors, recognizing the commune's powers of legislation and jurisdiction. On Charles V's election to succeed his grandfather in 1519, the Lucchese asked for confirmation of their privileges by the new emperor, offering 10,000 ducats for this favour. Some hard bargaining took place at the Imperial court before the Lucchese got what they wanted. They had paid a lot more than that, the Chancellor Gattinara remarked, for the protection of Louis, who was not even their sovereign as the emperor was. The Lucchese generally asked for the protection of whoever ruled Milan, their ambassador replied, with a reservation of the rights of the Empire over Lucca. The Emperor wanted money to pay his soldiers; he had offers from a German and a Spanish lord who were asking to be

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 252–3: Philip to Charles V, 16 Dec. 1548.

¹¹⁷ Desjardins and Canestrini, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, II, pp. 124–5: Francesco Pandolfini to X di Balìa, 7 Sept. 1505, Blois. For payments to the French, see Tommasi, *Sommario della Storia di Lucca*, pp. 353, 368; Luzzati, 'Politica di salvaguardia dell'autonomia lucchese', p. 572.

given Lucca as a fief. Eventually the price was set at 15,000 ducats. Lucca's liberty and privileges were confirmed, and the city with its territory was taken under the protection of the Emperor.¹¹⁸

Although Lucca was described in this document, as in some earlier grants by emperors, as an Imperial city, what exactly this meant has been a matter of dispute by scholars.¹¹⁹ For the Lucchese, it was a form of protection rather than a sign of subjection.¹²⁰ The time of greatest peril for Lucca's independence during the reign of Charles V came after the fall of the Florentine popular government in 1530, and during the period of the uprising by the Straccioni.¹²¹ An Imperial envoy, the Spaniard Juan Abril de Marzilla, who initially came to Lucca during the siege of Florence to organize supplies for the Imperial troops, stayed on after the conclusion of the war with secret orders not to leave until the city was quiet. His efforts to act as arbiter in Lucca's internal disputes and to behave as though he was almost the governor of the city made him very unpopular with Lucca's leading families. The nobles accused him of favouring the *popolari*.¹²² Some of them were reported to have sent a secret appeal to Andrea Doria in December, saying that rather than be dominated by the *popolo minuto*, they would prefer that Charles V should order Spanish troops to go to Lucca. Charles considered doing so, but then drew back. After the Straccioni had been put down, *popolari* exiles asked the Imperial ambassador in Rome to be restored to Lucca and protected there by an Imperial garrison, but their appeal met no response.¹²³ These invitations may have aroused little interest at the Imperial court because, once the civil dissension had calmed down, the Lucchese caused no trouble or threat to anyone—wanting only to be left alone—and they had no ports on the Tuscan coast that could be of use to the Imperial forces.

¹¹⁸ Tommasi, *Sommario della Storia di Lucca*, pp. 365–6, 379–81.

¹¹⁹ Simonetta Adorni Braccesi and Guja Simonetti, 'Lucca, repubblica e città imperiale da Carlo IV di Boemia a Carlo V', in Simonetta Adorni Braccesi and Mario Ascheri (eds), *Politica e cultura nelle Repubbliche italiane dal Medioevo all'Età moderna* (Annuario dell'Istituto storico italiano per l'Età moderna e contemporanea, 43–4) (Rome, 2001), pp. 291–3.

¹²⁰ Stefano Tabacchi, 'Lucca e Carlo V. Tra difesa della "libertas" e adesione al sistema imperiale', in Francesca Cantù and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds), *L'Italia di Carlo V. Guerra religione e politica nel primo Cinquecento* (Rome, 2003), pp. 411–32.

¹²¹ See above, pp. 222–3.

¹²² Tabacchi, 'Lucca e Carlo V', pp. 419–20.

¹²³ Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti*, pp. 136–43, 158.

Siena was a different matter: the geographical position of Siena and her ports, such as Porto Ercole, made control of the city and its territory a much more attractive proposition to Charles and his ministers and agents in Italy. The chronic instability of Sienese politics gave ample opportunity and pretext for outside intervention. Sienese popular government was already under internal threat in the 1490s before the arrival in Tuscany of Charles VIII and his army: the immediate effect of the upheaval caused by the French expedition was to reduce the power of the oligarchic group.¹²⁴ Later, however, although the French gave no support to Pandolfo Petrucci, he was able to exploit the difficulties and uncertainties of Italian politics and the campaigns in Tuscany to help him establish his own dominance in Siena. The appointment of five-year Balie could be justified by the need for vigilance; the campaigns in Tuscany were a reasonable pretext for hiring troops that Pandolfo wanted to have on hand to buttress his own position.¹²⁵

At a crucial point, support from Louis XII did help him considerably. Pandolfo had become involved with Gianpaolo Baglioni and other *condottieri* in the service of Cesare Borgia who conspired against him, and after Cesare had foiled the plot, he insisted that Pandolfo had to be expelled from Siena.¹²⁶ Pandolfo left Siena on 28 January 1503 and was formally exiled by the Balia, which explicitly declared that neither his family nor his property would be harmed.¹²⁷ His absence caused little upset; the Sienese found they could get on quite well without him and were not overly anxious to bring him back. It was Louis XII who pressed the Sienese to allow Pandolfo to return, sending an envoy to Siena to say that Pandolfo was under his protection; it took a fortnight for the Balia to make up their minds to agree. Pandolfo had had to buy Louis's protection by promising to pay 20,000 ducats, and to send his son Borghese to Louis as a hostage. These promises, and Louis's concern that Cesare Borgia should not add Siena to his list of acquisitions, were what prompted the king's intervention. For Pandolfo, or for his position in Siena,

¹²⁴ See above, pp. 116–8.

¹²⁵ Shaw, 'The French invasions and the establishment of the Petrucci *signoria* in Siena', pp. 168–81.

¹²⁶ Machiavelli, *Legazioni e commissarie*, I, p. 525: N. Machiavelli to X di Balia, 10 Jan. 1502(3), Torsiano.

¹²⁷ ASS, Balia 253, f. 166r–v.

Louis had no particular concern, and Pandolfo's failure to pay the money he had promised was not forgiven by the king. Three years later, he was threatening to send troops to collect it.¹²⁸ Pandolfo could not hope for any further help from Louis, but he succeeded in winning the support of Pope Julius II. When the pope was told in 1509 that French troops were to be sent 'to change the government of Siena', Julius warned that Siena was under his protection and he would send his own troops to defend the city.¹²⁹ In October 1511, Pandolfo found another powerful protector for himself and Siena in Ferdinand of Spain, with whom a league for ten years was concluded.¹³⁰

From the years when he first began to aspire to rise above his fellow oligarchs to the end of his career when he had succeeded in becoming, in the eyes of outsiders, the effective *signore* of Siena, Pandolfo was always eager to have the support of other powers.¹³¹ Pandolfo's dreams of founding a dynasty of *signori* were not realized. His inept son Borghese was propped up by Pope Leo X, and then, in 1515, was replaced by Raffaele di Giacoppo Petrucci, Bishop of Grosseto, who had been in the service of Leo X for some years; Leo despatched troops to effect the substitution. Raffaele, who was made a cardinal in 1517, died in 1522, within a year of Leo's death. His nephew Francesco Petrucci was beginning to make some headway in achieving a dominant position in Siena when the new Medici pope, Clement VII, tricked him into coming to Rome, and secured the election to the Balìa of Pandolfo's youngest son, Fabio, who had been in exile in Naples. Fabio's dependence on the pope was reinforced when he was given a Medici bride, Caterina di Galeotto de' Medici.¹³² Fabio was barely seventeen, and showed no sign of having inherited his father's skills. His lack of support in Siena, and his dependence on the alliance of the Medici and Florence, and through them with France, at a time when French fortunes in Italy were at a low ebb in 1524, encouraged those who wanted to return to a

¹²⁸ Desjardins and Canestrini, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, II, pp. 166–7: Francesco Pandolfini to X di Balìa, 12 May 1506, Bourges.

¹²⁹ Roberto Cessi (ed.), *Dispacci degli ambasciatori veneziani alla corte di Roma presso Giulio II: 25 giugno 1509–9 gennaio 1510* (Venice, 1932), p. 137; Domenico Trevisan *et al.*, 25 Oct. 1509, Rome.

¹³⁰ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, f. 116r–v.

¹³¹ Shaw, *L'ascesa al potere di Pandolfo Petrucci*, pp. 77–138.

¹³² Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 118r–123r.

popular government in Siena to take arms against him. Fabio put up little resistance before fleeing.¹³³

There was little prospect of the Siennese returning to the pattern of stable popular government that there had been in the city before 1480. Not only had the Petrucci been dominant for a generation, but political conflicts that had their roots in the previous century vitiated every attempt to set up a regime that would be generally acceptable. There were no fewer than ten major reforms in government between 1525 and 1552.¹³⁴ Holding government office was of still more importance than before for the finances of many Siennese families.¹³⁵ Competition for office continued to exacerbate conflict between the *monti*, and factions. The principal divide was between some leading *Popolari* and their allies from other *monti*, and the *Nove*. Twice the *Nove* were expelled from the government (and many went into exile), in 1527 and 1546. On their return to the regime at the behest of the representatives of Charles V in 1530 and 1548, there inevitably followed further rearrangements of the government *monti*. In the disorders that led to their expulsion, on both occasions, the *Noveschi* were hunted through the streets and several killed, while the houses of many more were ransacked. As with the persecution of the *Nove* in 1483, these episodes could only widen the gulf between the *Nove* and their enemies. In the circumstances it was small wonder that many of them felt very insecure in Siena, and comprehensible that many welcomed the presence of the Spanish garrison that came to Siena in 1530 and then stayed for over twenty years.

¹³³ Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', pp. 32–4. For the institutional changes and continuities during the regimes from 1500 to 1525, see Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 121–250.

¹³⁴ Judith Hook, 'Habsburg imperialism and Italian particularism: the case of Charles V and Siena', *European Studies Review*, 9 (1979), pp. 300–3; Ann Katherine Isaacs, 'Impero, Francia, Medici: orientamenti politici e gruppi sociali a Siena nel primo Cinquecento', in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500*, 3 vols (Florence, 1983), I, pp. 257–70. In the absence of any detailed modern accounts of these turbulent years of Siennese history, the most useful narratives are still those by Giovanni Antonio Pecci, *Memorie storico-critiche della città di Siena fino agl'anni MDLII*, 4 vols (Siena, 1755–60), and Malavolti, *Dell'Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 123r–152r. Arnaldo d'Addario, *Il problema senese nella storia italiana della prima metà del Cinquecento* (Florence, 1958), despite its title, is mostly concerned with the 1550s, and largely based on Pecci in accounts of internal affairs.

¹³⁵ Hook, 'Habsburg imperialism and Italian particularism', pp. 297–8; Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', pp. 62–3.

Exiled Noveschi had some success at presenting themselves at the Imperial court and to the Emperor's agents in Italy as 'nobles', while labelling their enemies in Siena as plebeians and petty tradesmen.¹³⁶ The Imperial ambassador in Rome, the Duke of Sessa, described the government in 1525 as 'under the name of liberty', being 'a tyrannical licence, with which the *plebe* wants to destroy all the nobility'; 'over eighty of the richest gentlemen of the city' were in exile, he said.¹³⁷ Defending themselves against such criticism, the Sieneese denied that the *plebe* 'in itself, has any power at all'. Siena was governed by 1800 citizens ('cittadini da reggimento'), who participated in the 'noble and politic government'.¹³⁸ In 1530 Ferrante Gonzaga, who was about to intervene in Siena as a commander of the Imperial troops in Tuscany, complained that 'there was no gentleman left in Siena'; to which the Sieneese ambassador replied that all those born within the walls of Siena were equally noble.¹³⁹ Despite the support the Nove received from some of the Emperor's men, the Popolari also declared themselves to be partisans of the Emperor, and they did not lack for friends at the Imperial court. Alfonso Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi, brother-in-law of the Imperial commander, the Marchese del Vasto, and the Archbishop of Siena, Giovanni Piccolomini, continued the family tradition of acting as spokesmen for and protectors of the Monte del Popolo. It was the Marchese del Vasto who in 1531 installed the Duke of Amalfi as Imperial representative in Siena, commanding a garrison of Spanish infantry. But so partial was Piccolomini, so in thrall to the extremist leaders of the Monte del Popolo, that by 1541 even some Popolari were complaining to Charles V.¹⁴⁰

By then, Imperial agents in Italy had been trying to shape the form of government in Siena for twenty years. After the death of Cardinal Raffaele Petrucci in 1522, the Duke of Sessa ordered the Sieneese to assemble the Council of the People to elect two or three

¹³⁶ Carlo Falletti Fossati, 'Principali cause della caduta della repubblica senese', in Ettore Pellegrini (ed.), *La caduta della Repubblica di Siena* (Siena, 1991), p. 128.

¹³⁷ AGSimancas, E 1454, 43.

¹³⁸ 'questo governo nobile et politico': *ibid.*, E 1454, 45 (published in Shaw, 'Popular government and the Petrucci').

¹³⁹ Isaacs, 'Impero, Francia, Medici', p. 261, and see pp. 261–2, note 27.

¹⁴⁰ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 137r–141v; Roberto Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena (1552–1559): i termini della questione senese nella lotta tra Francia e Absburgo nel '500 e il suo risolversi nell' ambito del Principato mediceo* (Siena, 1962), pp. LXXIII–LXXIV.

envoys to him, so that Siena 'could satisfy his Majesty in taking from him, as it should, a form of government to maintain liberty while expelling all tyranny and unrest.'¹⁴¹ But it was the pope, not the Emperor, who at that time had more influence over Sienese affairs. It was Clement who brought Fabio Petrucci to power, and when Fabio was driven out, Clement and his French allies who pressed for an oligarchic form of government. A four-year 'Balìa minore' of 78 was elected in January 1525, and then, at Clement's insistence, delegated full authority to a commission of sixteen the following month.¹⁴² The pope had also agreed with the Nove that one of their number, Alessandro Bichi, was to hold a position of unofficial prominence.¹⁴³

When Bichi was assassinated in April 1525 by the 'Libertini', who opposed the subjection of Siena to the interference of the Medici, the Duke of Sessa was pleased, because he had feared that Clement was preparing to take over Siena. He did not make any objection to the new form of government, in which a Balìa of twenty-one, called the 'Conservatori della Libertà', was to sit for only four months at a time, like the Balie of the early 1480s.¹⁴⁴ But he was not on good terms with the new regime. While the Libertini proclaimed their devotion to the Emperor, and an ambassador was sent to the Spanish viceroy of Naples asking him to take Siena under his protection, the Duke of Sessa protested about the persecution of those who felt unsafe and had gone into exile. Hearing that he intended to come to Siena, the Balìa decided that if he brought troops or Sienese exiles with him, he would not be admitted. Commands from the duke in the name of Charles V, when some opponents of the new regime were sent into exile, that the sentences should be revoked,

¹⁴¹ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, f. 122r-v.

¹⁴² The Balìa of 150, plus the full Concistoro, which had been elected after the fall of Fabio Petrucci, was to continue in office, but Clement and the French argued it was too large to conduct business effectively (*ibid.*, ff. 123r-124r).

¹⁴³ See Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 209-42, 335-40, for the institutional changes.

¹⁴⁴ There were other adjustments recalling the changes of government in the 1480s, with a reshuffle of the government monti (the Dodici moving from the Gentiluomini to the Popolari). The *provvisionati della piazza*, which had been under Alessandro Bichi's command, were dismissed and it was decreed that there were to be no more such infantry guards unless they would be under the control of the Council of the People: Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, f. 125r; see also Terziani, *Il Governo di Siena*, pp. 242-8.

were met by instructions to the Sienese ambassadors in Spain to ask Charles to order him to leave the government of Siena to the Balia.¹⁴⁵

It was not a coincidence that the rampage against the Nove and their property and their subsequent expulsion from the government in 1527, followed the sack of Rome by Imperial troops and the expulsion of the Medici from Florence. In the subsequent changes to the government there were again reminiscences of changes introduced in the 1480s, such as a reshuffle of the government *monti* and a rebalancing of the numbers of the different *monti* in the Council of the People. Some felt that the popular governments of Siena and Florence should support one another, while others felt that the Sienese had to align themselves with the Emperor. These disagreements led to hesitations and delays in meeting the requests for support from the Imperial forces besieging Florence, so that the government of Siena was still regarded with suspicion by some influential agents of the Emperor.¹⁴⁶

Clement's hopes of restoring a government to his liking under the Nove led by Fabio Petrucci, had been dashed by the death of Petrucci in 1529. The Nove, however, had the support of the Emperor's men, who, after the fall of Florence, turned their attention to settling the affairs of Siena. Lopez de Soria was sent to Siena to negotiate the return of the exiles, while Ferrante Gonzaga, at that time commander of the Imperial troops in Tuscany, brought his men into Sienese territory and demanded that not only should the exiles be allowed to return but that the government should be reformed, and the Nove should have a part in it. The commission to draw up the outline of the new government included Lopez de Soria and Alfonso Piccolomini, the Duke of Amalfi. It decided that the Nove should hold a quarter of government offices, that there should be a Balia of twenty-one, and that the Duke of Amalfi should be the captain-general of Sienese troops. Neither the Nove nor their enemies liked this. The Nove wanted a single *monte*, with offices distributed by *terzi*, and a Spanish garrison, not under command of the Duke of Amalfi, closely connected as he was to the *Popolari*. The opponents of the Nove did not want them in the government at all. For a while, the Duke of Amalfi had to be withdrawn, but in 1532 he returned, and the garrison of four hundred Spanish troops that had been under

¹⁴⁵ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 125v–126v.

¹⁴⁶ Isaacs, 'Impero, Francia e Medici', pp. 259–60.

the command of Lopez de Soria was reduced to one hundred. With the pliant Duke of Amalfi as the Imperial representative in Siena the Popolari, or rather a faction of the Popolari led by the Salvi, were in the ascendant in Siena throughout the 1530s. It was a complaint to Charles V by their opponents among the Popolari themselves in 1541 that led to the arrival of the Emperor's chief minister, Granvelle, in Siena to reorder the government.¹⁴⁷

A jurist from Cremona, Francesco Sfondrati, was sent ahead to Siena, and he drafted the proposals that Granvelle ratified after his own arrival there in November 1541. There was to be a Balia of forty, serving a two-year term, with eight of its members to be nominated by a representative of the Emperor, and the rest elected by the Council of the People. Civil and criminal justice were to be overseen by a Captain of Justice, nominated first by Granvelle and then by the governments of Milan and Naples, and finally, after nine years, by the Sienese.¹⁴⁸ Proposals put forward by such a powerful minister of the Emperor could not be rejected, but the opponents of the Nove still could not accept that they should have an equal share with the other *monti* in the government. Discontent was increased by the suspected partiality towards the Nove of Sfondrati, who was left in Siena by Granvelle as the Imperial representative, and then of Juan de Luna, who replaced him in 1543. De Luna could not stop ugly clashes between the Nove and the Popolari and their allies in 1546, which led to yet another pogrom against the Nove, their exclusion from the government, and the withdrawal from Siena of de Luna and the Spanish garrison.¹⁴⁹ A commission of nine with the Captain of the People was to exercise the authority of the Balia of forty for three months. The nine commissioners were to be drawn equally from the *monti* of the Riformatori, Popolari and Gentiluomini, but all other offices were to be divided in the proportion of two Popolari to one Riformatore and one Gentiluomo.¹⁵⁰

Charles V could not let this situation rest unchallenged. Initially

¹⁴⁷ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 136v–141v; Roberto Cantagalli, 'Mario Bandini, un uomo della oligarchia senese negli ultimi tempi della repubblica', *Bollettino senese di storia patria*, 71 (1964), pp. 66–9.

¹⁴⁸ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 141v–142r.; Isaacs, 'Impero, Francia, Medici', p. 264; Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, p. LXXVI.

¹⁴⁹ Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, pp. LXXVII–VIII.

¹⁵⁰ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, f. 145r; Hook, 'Habsburg imperialism and Italian particularism', p. 302.

he ordered the Marchese del Vasto, who might, because of his connection with the Duke of Amalfi, have been sympathetic to the Popolari, to see to a reform. To the dismay of the Popolari, the Marchese soon died, and Granvelle picked up the commission again. Even more ominously, Ferrante Gonzaga was ordered to intervene as well. He demanded that the Nove should be readmitted to the government and that the Sieneese should receive several hundred Spanish troops. They protested they could not afford to do this, and refused to accept them until after victory for Charles V in Germany in 1547 raised the stock of Imperial power in Italy. Four hundred Spanish troops were admitted to the city in September. The following month the new representative of the Emperor arrived in Siena, Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza.¹⁵¹

Some Sieneese were becoming uncomfortably aware of how low the reputation of their city had sunk at the Imperial court. 'Everybody thinks Siena stinks', reported the Sieneese ambassador disconsolately, reflecting on the bad impression given by conflicting embassies from opposed factions trying to undermine each other.¹⁵² Mendoza was greeted with enthusiasm, because he had spent some time as a student at the university of Siena and had made friends in the city, and it was believed he would be sympathetic. He was not; he distrusted the Sieneese, and believed that '*popoli* must be dominated by force or deceived'.¹⁵³ His comprehension of Sieneese politics was not helped by his frequent, prolonged absences in Rome, where he was Imperial ambassador.

In June 1548 Charles V wrote to the Sieneese, exhorting them to do what Mendoza asked of them in the Emperor's name. When Mendoza came to Siena the following October, he told them that Charles wanted to remove the root cause of trouble, the inequality between citizens, which meant that he wanted them to bring the Nove back into the *reggimento* with a quarter-share of offices. The Council of the People¹⁵⁴ did not agree, but remitted the final decision

¹⁵¹ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 145v–146v; Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, pp. LXXVIII–IX.

¹⁵² Cantagalli, 'Mario Bandini', p. 72.

¹⁵³ Simonetta Losi, *Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, ambasciatore di Spagna presso la Repubblica di Siena (1547–1552)* (Siena, 1997), p. 64.

¹⁵⁴ Since 1545 the General Council had been abolished and the Council of the People was formally known as the Senate. (Mario Ascheri (ed.), *L'ultimo statuto della Repubblica di Siena (1545)* (Siena, 1993), pp. 15–16.)

to Charles. Mendoza reiterated that Charles wanted the Nove to have a quarter-share of the *reggimento*, and said that he also wanted a *Balia* of forty, with twenty elected by the Council of the People and twenty by Mendoza. This time the Council acquiesced—more from fear of the power of the Emperor, once again enjoying victory in Germany, than because they were deceived by Mendoza's wiles, according to Malavolti.¹⁵⁵

After these changes to the government, Mendoza began, in consultation with Ferrante Gonzaga, to prepare the next stage of the process of bringing Siena firmly under Spanish military control. Spanish troops began to arrive from Milan, supposedly in transit for Naples but in fact staying at Siena. As their numbers increased, and their arrogant and disorderly behaviour became an increasing grievance, Mendoza suggested that a barracks should be built for them, and from that passed on to the idea of building a fortress. While assuring the Imperial court that the Sienese would be content to have a fortress, Mendoza told the Sienese that Charles wanted one to save money on the garrison, because fewer troops would be needed, and to discourage disorder. Two ambassadors of Mendoza's choosing were sent to Charles, officially to ask him not to insist on a fortress because to do so would cause trouble, but with instructions so worded as to imply that a fortress was in fact desirable and necessary.¹⁵⁶

That the great majority of the Sienese really had no wish for a fortress was so evident that Mendoza was forced to agree to two more embassies being sent to the Emperor in 1550, the second bearing a petition with a thousand signatures (the historian Orlando Malavolti was one of the envoys who presented it to Charles). A fortress would be the ruin of the city, the destruction of the *libertà* and reputation of the Sienese, the petition pleaded, appealing to Charles's benignity and clemency.¹⁵⁷ Charles assured them that he wanted the fortress to be built to secure their *libertà*, not to suppress it; it would repress their internal quarrels, which carried the danger

¹⁵⁵ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, ff. 147v–148r.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 149r–v; Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, pp. LXXXI–III.

¹⁵⁷ 'Memoriale porto dalli quattro Ambasciatori a S. M. Cesarea, sottoscritto de mille cittadini', Appendix of documents to Alessandro Sozzini, 'Diario delle cose avvenute in Siena dal 20 luglio 1550 al 28 giugno 1555', *Archivio storico italiano*, 2 (1842), pp. 444–6.

of one of the parties calling in another power. In the role of the doctor who prescribed a salutary medicine that the patient, unmindful of what was good for him, did not want to take, he judged a fortress to be the best remedy for Siena's chronic ailment of strife between factions.¹⁵⁸

Regardless of the objections of the Sieneze, Mendoza pressed ahead, sending plans of the projected fortress to Charles for his approval. Prayers were offered in the cathedral, religious processions paraded through the city, and a commission of eight was appointed to devise ways of persuading the Emperor there was no need for a fortress, but Mendoza ordered the demolition of houses and towers to clear the ground on the chosen site, and work began on the fortress in November 1550. However much the Sieneze protested, they had themselves given a trump card to the Emperor, which Mendoza could use. In 1546, anxious to recover the favour of the Emperor after the uprising of that year, they had literally given him *carte blanche*, a document affirming their automatic consent to any provision he made. This had already been invoked by the Emperor's ministers to silence the Sieneze ambassadors, and Mendoza employed it to take a forced loan of 25,000 ducats from Siena's public coffers to pay for work on the fortress, and to impose extraordinary taxes.¹⁵⁹

The Sieneze had made another injudicious concession to Mendoza, which he was also ready to invoke. They had agreed that non-riseduti could sit in the Council of the People or the Balìa, provided they were considered worthy because of their merits or their wealth.¹⁶⁰ When the Sieneze proposed to convene a special assembly of representatives of all households in Siena to discuss the fortress in November 1550, Mendoza threatened to declare all those who attended riseduti, which was sufficient to cause the proposal to be dropped.¹⁶¹ Although he described citizens who were not riseduti as 'plebs',¹⁶² increasing the numbers in the *reggimento* was one of the devices he thought was needed to secure control of Siena, even with

¹⁵⁸ Malavolti, *Dell' Historia di Siena*, III, f. 150r-v.

¹⁵⁹ Ettore Pellegrini, *Le fortezze della Repubblica di Siena: vicende edilizie, significato strategico, condizioni operative dell'architettura fortificata rinascimentale nel conflitto tra Francia e Impero per il controllo del territorio senese* (Siena, 1992), pp. 88-108.

¹⁶⁰ Losi, *Diego Hurtado de Mendoza*, p. 66.

¹⁶¹ Hook, 'Habsburg imperialism and Italian particularism', p. 305.

¹⁶² 'los çibdadanos no resedutos son la plebe': Alberto Vazquez and R. Selden Rose, *Algunas cartas de Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza escritas 1538-1552* (New Haven, 1935), p. 140: Mendoza to Antoine Perrenot, 1 Dec. 1549, Rome.

a fortress. It was not enough to have a gentleman governing Siena in the guise of an ambassador, he considered; such a man would rob them to the bone, as others had done, and as he would not be able to play the 'foreign tyrant', 'in four hours, they would break his head, even if he had seven fortresses'. They would feel their *stato* had been injured and would plot to put Siena under the pope, or the king of France, or the Duke of Florence, and destroy the fortress. He was convinced that this was what would happen, wrote Mendoza, unless three things were done. Firstly, two places had to be fortified, one on the coast and one half way between the coast and city (Ferrante Gonzaga also thought this had to be done); secondly, the revenues of Siena had to be taken over; thirdly, the government should on one hand be tightened by appointing a vicar and lieutenant (the title of governor should be avoided, as the Siennese were very concerned about what names were used), and on the other be broadened, to include many people.¹⁶³

Mendoza's determination in pushing ahead with the construction of the fortress despite the laments of the Siennese did not force their compliance. Charles V gave his approval to the plans, but did not provide the money to realize them, and Mendoza could not squeeze enough from the Siennese, and was forced to go heavily into debt himself to keep the work going. Not only his own reputation was at stake, he argued: if the fortress were to be abandoned, 'we will lose three things', he wrote to Charles V's confidential minister, Antoine Perrenot, 'reputation with other cities and states, this city, and the large amount of money spent so far'.¹⁶⁴ In fact, persisting with the construction of the fortress caused the loss of Siena. When Mendoza was away in Rome and had sent half the Spanish troops in Siena to strengthen the coastal defences against attack by the Turks, a plot backed by the French attracted widespread support when the conspirators' forces entered the city on 28 July 1552. The remaining Spanish troops together with reinforcements that Cosimo de' Medici had sent were forced to take refuge in the half-built fortress.

Unfortunately the Siennese, having freed themselves from the tutelage of the Spanish, not only found themselves dependent on the French for their defence, but also proved unable to grasp the impor-

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 250–1: Mendoza to Antoine Perrenot, 27 May 1551, Rome.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206: Mendoza to Antoine Perrenot, 31 Jan. 1551, Siena.

tance of shelving their differences to form a united and effective government. For some, the distribution of offices remained the paramount concern. Many Popolari were offended by provisions for the equal distribution of offices among the monti; their monte had more members and had taken a greater part in the expulsion of the Spanish, so they should have a larger share, they felt. These provisions had been pushed through, after four months of wrangling, under pressure from the pope and the representative of the French in Siena, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. The proposals were based on a scheme drawn up by two Florentine exiles, and the French were represented on the reform commission that finally approved them. In July 1553 the Balìa had to pass measures to counter the formation of pressure groups intriguing to obtain offices. The following year, it took a month—in the middle of a war in which the survival of Siena was at stake—for agreement to be reached on the appointment of a new board of the Eight of War.¹⁶⁵ There were many fine speeches and proposals in the Council that discussed the problem on 8 May 1554 but, when they were put to the vote, none of them were accepted, wrote Alessandro Sozzini. Many worthy men were discouraged, fearing the Siense would end up 'like that mouse that gnawed the cheese in the trap'.¹⁶⁶ In September, as reports came in of the mustering of the Imperial troops and those of Cosimo de' Medici, the Siense could not even muster a quorum in the Council for the election of the new Concistoro and Captain of the People. 'Many judged that the disunity of the Siense would soon send them to perdition.'¹⁶⁷

Siena had become so weakened, her resources so depleted, according to the bleak analysis of the Siense ambassador in France, that she could only escape the clutches of the Duke of Florence if she was protected by another power. Added to this, the internal discord of her citizens made every prince think it would be easy to occupy the city. If the French troops left, they would have to turn to some other power.¹⁶⁸ But Siena under the 'protection' of the French was even less of an independent state than under the tutelage of Charles

¹⁶⁵ Hook, 'Habsburg imperialism and Italian particularism', pp. 299, 305–6; Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, pp. 45–7.

¹⁶⁶ Sozzini, 'Diario delle cose avvenute in Siena', pp. 204, 211–4.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 302–3.

¹⁶⁸ Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, pp. 374–5; B. Buoninsegni to the Otto di Guerra, 18 Nov. 1554.

V's representatives, and by placing themselves under the sway of the French, they had effectively sealed the fate of what remained of their republic. Charles V could not leave the French to establish themselves in southern Tuscany, and Cosimo de' Medici was ready to stake his claim to the gratitude of the Emperor, and to the reward of the grant of Siena, by using his forces to drive them out.

When the city of Siena fell, many Sieneſe—about 700 men and their families—left with the departing French troops on 21 April 1555. Most of the exiles were Popolari, including the Captain of the People, Mario Bandini, who took the seals of the republic with him.¹⁶⁹ They went to the stronghold of Montalcino, where they set up 'the republic of Siena in Montalcino'. This government in exile exercised political control over all Sieneſe territory that was still held by the French; the local government of Montalcino remained in the hands of the Montalcinesi. Four men, one of them Mario Bandini, were appointed to head the government in exile, and they ordered all *riseduti* in places in Sieneſe territory not in the hands of the Imperial troops to come to Montalcino to form a governing council, and take part in the distribution of offices. About 150 *riseduti* quickly assembled; even in this desperate situation, there was no question of opening up the council to non-*riseduti*. While attachment to the independence of Siena, and to the customary form of government—to *libertà* in both its senses—unquestionably motivated some of the exiles, many were also there because they feared they were compromised in the eyes of the Imperiali by close association with the French. For all the trappings of a free republic, including the minting of their own coinage, the republic of Siena in Montalcino was completely dependent on French protection. They could not even enrol in the French forces to defend themselves; the only way they could earn money was as officials in places held by the French.

In response to their request for formal recognition of their republic from the French king, Henry II, they received a demand that they must first formally submit to the crown of France. By a vote of 69 to five, on 13 December 1556, the council of the exiles in Montalcino agreed to this, describing their republic as 'a republic and royal state', dedicated to the Virgin and under the protection of the Most Christian king, based at Montalcino or Grosseto until

¹⁶⁹ Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, p. 406.

it pleased God, with the help of the king, to restore them to Siena.¹⁷⁰ When Henry finally got around to signifying his acceptance of their submission (notification of his acceptance did not arrive until July 1557), he ordained that there should be a Signoria of eight members, elected by the French governor, and a General Council of up to 60 members; all were to receive a stipend.¹⁷¹ Back in Siena, there was an Imperial governor, Cardinal Burgos, who ruled without even bothering to pretend to consult the communal government. Yet far from being generally regarded as heroes in Siena, the exiles were unpopular with many, including their own relatives that they had left behind, and who longed for peace.

By the time that Henry signified his acceptance, the French were already planning to leave the Sieneese at Montalcino to their fate. Up to the conclusion of the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in April 1559 which set the seal on Spanish hegemony in Italy, they deluded them into thinking that the peace terms would include a stipulation that Siena should be a free republic. The king did at least get a guarantee from Philip II that the exiles should be pardoned and their property restored to them, but Montalcino and the other places in Sieneese territory held by the French were surrendered to Philip, who had already granted them to Cosimo de' Medici.¹⁷²

To many Sieneese, submission to the Duke of Florence was worse than submission to the Emperor or the King of Spain. Cosimo had played his cards with his customary skill and, despite the fact that Philip did not like him very much, had traded on the role he had played in the siege of Siena and in fighting the French in Tuscany to obtain the grant of Siena as a fief. Originally Philip had specified that Siena was to remain a free republic, but Cosimo had objected that this would render a grant meaningless. In the end, the stipulation agreed was that Siena should be governed by the citizens, in their traditional magistracies. Offices were to be distributed among the *monti*, as usual, and *riseduti* were to retain their privileges. The choice of the most important officials was to be reserved to the duke, with the advice of the governor of Siena.¹⁷³

All of the four independent republics in which a substantial pro-

¹⁷⁰ G. Milanesi, 'Documenti riguardanti la Repubblica Senese ritirata in Montalcino (1556-1558)', *Archivio storico italiano, Appendice*, 8 (1850), Appendix 26, pp. 393-8.

¹⁷¹ Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, p. 510.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 522-3.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 503-6, 508; Marrara, *Riseduti e nobiltà*, pp. 115-23.

portion of the citizens retained a strong attachment to the institutions and ethos of popular government—Lucca, Genoa, Florence and Siena—had to find a place within an Italian political system increasingly dominated by the Spanish and Italian agents of the Emperor Charles V. For these agents, the governors, viceroys, generals and ambassadors, the form of government of these republics was not their main concern in their dealings with them. Any form of government they supported was only a means to an end: that end being the maintenance of Imperial—in effect, Spanish—rule over Milan, Naples and Sicily and, if possible, extending that rule over other areas of Italy, or at least ensuring that the remaining independent states would be guided by Spanish-Imperial influence and not ally with the enemies of Charles V. His agents in Italy were inclined to recommend keeping control through garrisons of Spanish soldiers, fortresses and the effective rule, however it was formally presented, of Imperial governors. They were not concerned, even the Italian Ferrante Gonzaga, with the finer points of republican constitutions. Andrea Doria's suggestion that Genoa could be held loyal to Charles V and his heir by oligarchic reforms was met with unconvinced indifference, which turned to hostility when it appeared that such reforms would be used as a reason to deny the need for a fortress. In Siena, Mendoza cynically suggested broadening the Sienese government because he thought it would make Siena easier to control—like Italian governments seeking to relax the grip of an oligarchy in a subject town. Charles V himself may not have been drawn to republican forms of government, but this did not mean he was necessarily opposed to them in all circumstances. After the assassination of Alessandro de' Medici in 1537, he did think of favouring a return to republican government in Florence, until he was convinced that Cosimo de' Medici would be loyal and could provide a surer guarantee that the Florentines would not return to their partiality for a French alliance.¹⁷⁴

If republics with strong elements of popular government were in difficulties, it was not because Charles V was antipathetic to republics as such.¹⁷⁵ He and his advisers at court were working largely on the

¹⁷⁴ Giorgio Spini, *Cosimo I de' Medici e la indipendenza del principato mediceo* (Florence, 1945), p. 106.

information they were fed by his agents in Italy, and the most influential of these were persistently advocating direct control of any state that threatened to cause disruption—as factious popular governments threatened to do. Genoa’s independence was saved by having Andrea Doria to protect it at critical moments, and by the Genoese bankers finding a vital role within the Empire as financiers. The Lucchese preserved their independence by internal compromise and keeping a low profile. In Siena and Florence, the revival of popular government after the domination of the Petrucci and the Medici failed, destroyed in large part by the intransigence of its supporters. Popular inflexibility in external relations fatally hindered the Florentines in the late 1520s from warding off the hostility of Clement VII. Popular government in Siena was hindered by factions which were still fighting their grandfathers’ battles, and by the fact that few Sienese seemed to remember the ideal of disinterested public service, of offices rotating among a large group of citizens so that many had experience of governing as well as of being governed. A share in government had come to mean not so much a chance to participate in the governing councils of their republic, as a share in salaried offices. Those who cherished more disinterested ideals could not combat the greed and blinkered vision of their fellow citizens.

¹⁷⁵ He had no explicit political programme in relation to cities in Italy or elsewhere: Wolfgang Reinhard, “Governi stretti e tirannici”. Las ciudades y la política del Emperador Carlos V, 1515–1556, in Alfred Kohler (ed.), *Carlos V/Karl V. 1500–2000* (Madrid, 2001), pp. 151–77.

CONCLUSION

The in some ways heroic, if hopeless, defence of Siena and its in some ways bathetic coda of 'the republic of Siena in Montalcino', have traditionally been seen as emblematic of the end of the era of communal *libertà* in Italy. But 'the republic of Siena in Montalcino' was a poor embodiment of the ideals of popular government, and the principles that had underlain popular government in Italy did not die with its demise. That there was a sea change in the political life of many towns and cities in Renaissance Italy is beyond dispute—but how should it be defined? It was not a defeat of popular government by oligarchy. Popular governments generally had some element of oligarchy in them, and oligarchies could share important ideals and characteristics of popular government. 'Mixed' government was the norm; what varied was how and to what degree the elements were mixed. The change that came about in so many of these mixed governments was that the balance shifted decisively towards oligarchy. What conclusions can be drawn from this investigation into the nature of civic governments in Renaissance Italy and the transformations that so many of them were undergoing?

The starting point is that in deciding whether a given civic government was popular or oligarchic, or predominantly popular or oligarchical, the best indicator is not what role the trade guilds may or may not have had in it, but the nature of the legislative council or councils. One factor to be considered in assessing such a council is how many members there were, and what proportion of the adult male population might have the right or the opportunity to sit in it, take part in its deliberations and vote. Just counting heads will not suffice, however; statistics alone cannot reveal the full story. The Council of the People in Siena would have had far more members in the late 1490s, when the oligarchical group who were directing affairs attempted to appease discontent by making membership of the council virtually automatic for all members of the *monti* (except for the politically proscribed), than in the 1440s when it was restricted to those who had sat on the *Concistoro*. But the council had lost much of its power to the *Balia* by the end of the century, and rather than being flattered by the guarantee of a seat in it, many *Siene*se

would have preferred membership of the council to be an honour, and to bring with it a voice in an assembly with a decisive role in the political life of their city, even if it meant that they and some of their relatives might never sit on it. The powers, the functions, the procedures of councils need to be taken into account as well. Hand-picked by the doge on each occasion those who were summoned to it might be, but the council in Genoa was a far more effective institution of popular participatory government than was a Parlamento in Florence. The Parlamento might have looked like an archetypal popular assembly, as the crowd of citizens, summoned by a bell, filled the square before the Palace of the Signoria to give assent to important institutional changes. But assent was all they could give, and armed men at the entrances to the square were ready to keep out potential troublemakers who could not be relied on to agree to whatever was put before them. In the Genoese councils, the hand-picked assemblies had to include a mix of social groups, with quotas of *artefici*, together with merchants and nobles, and everyone present had an equal right to make proposals, to give his opinion on what others said, and to vote. They could criticize and reprove the doge and the executive committees, and give them instructions as to what they should do and how they should do it. Those instructions might include an injunction to sound out public opinion outside the council hall, to go out into the streets and solicit the views of the citizens there, and then to act on what was found to be the consensus.

Not all towns had an effective legislative council; those that did not were unlikely to have had much of a popular element to their government. Executive committees were not so reliable a guide to the nature of the regime. If its main executive body was composed of a restricted number of members sitting for long terms, perhaps for life, then a civic government was indisputably oligarchical. But executive committees whose members sat for short terms, which might be thought an indicator of popular government, could be found in oligarchical regimes too. There could be frequent rotation in executive office, when those eligible to serve were drawn from a small pool. On the other hand, regimes in which there was a large and active legislative assembly could have an executive committee drawn from only part of those eligible for the council. If there was a formal additional qualification needed for seats in the executive—a requirement to hold a certain amount of property, for instance,

or to be descended from a family that had been resident in the town for a specified period—that could be considered as an oligarchical element in an otherwise popular government. If the limitations on who among those formally qualified for political office would sit in the executive committee were purely pragmatic—some men, because of their wealth, birth, education or personal abilities and qualities, would be considered more suitable to hold high office, while others might not have the personal qualities required, or be unable to give up the necessary time to do so—it need not be.

Extraordinary executive committees with members sitting for extended terms, generally appointed to deal with specific problems, could feature in both popular and oligarchic governments. For all types of government, such extraordinary bodies would often include a sizeable contingent of men regularly chosen for these tasks. Whether they were there on merit, because their fellow citizens chose them as being the most capable, or they were placed there because they were members or allies of a dominant cabal, was a crucial distinction. The former method of selection was much more easily compatible with popular government; the latter could be an indication the a popular government was becoming an oligarchical one.

Crises in external relations, the threat of war or the conduct of war, were the circumstances in which the need for an extraordinary commission was most likely to be felt by any government. Dealing with the problems caused by war—raising and paying for troops, coordinating actions with allies, defending territory and people—could be an especially difficult challenge for popular governments. It was recognized that the regular institutions and practices of popular government were not well suited to meeting that challenge. Decisions that needed to be made quickly and kept secret could not be taken in large assemblies, and the call for experience and expertise meant that the usual mechanisms for rotation in office might have to be set aside. Popular governments could make the necessary adaptations, meet the challenges they faced in time of war and then revert to their usual forms and practices when peace returned, without being permanently changed or weakened. They could even survive the Italian Wars—if the description of the Lucchese of their own government as *popolare* is to be accepted, popular government could survive those wars in an independent republic. The stresses of the Italian Wars and their attendant political pressures brought about the demise of popular government in Florence, made it difficult for

popular government to prevail in Siena, and forced the Genoese to face the need for constitutional change. In all three cases, however, external pressures only served to make existing internal problems more difficult to contain and resolve.

Thinking about how governments should be composed, about who had the right to participate in political life, was being conditioned by social and cultural developments, rather than by external pressures. French and Spanish influence did encourage urban elites to see themselves, and present themselves to others, as civic nobilities, if only to stake a claim to be treated with greater respect by the French and Spanish and Imperial nobles, the military commanders and officials and diplomats they had to deal with. Again, such considerations would only reinforce existing tendencies, they would not create them. The shift towards oligarchy that made it the dominant characteristic form of Italian civic government by the mid sixteenth century came about because of long-term changes in urban societies—changes in social attitudes, rather than social structures, perhaps. Transformations in government could be the outcome of a project of a few ambitious men, engineering institutional modifications to entrench themselves and their allies in power. In some circumstances, they could be introduced by a dominant central government, a republic or a prince or on the initiative of their agents and officials. But if a fundamental modification in government was to work, and to endure, it had to reflect the ideas and attitudes of a significant proportion of the political community.

The ideology of popular government, like its institutions, was not wholly distinct from that of oligarchy. Both could stress equality among the members of the political community, the importance of participation in government, the significance and value of the experience of governing and of being governed. The difference would be in ideas about who should be a member of the political community. For the advocates of both popular government and of oligarchy, the primary meaning of participation in government was often who could hold office, especially offices that brought a salary or other opportunities for financial gain, rather than who should have a say in determining policy, in making decisions. A right to a share in the fruits of political office could be regarded as part of their family patrimony by supporters of either form of government. If some men began to think that some citizens had a greater right than others, or an exclusive right, if they aspired to hold offices frequently, or

all the time, if political office became a mainstay of the family fortunes—then this common attitude could become a spur to oligarchy. Sentiments and arguments that office-holding should be restricted to a privileged few, could be reinforced by justifications that a certain level of education was necessary to undertake the duties of office effectively, or properly to appreciate the problems that arose and to give sound advice on how they could be confronted and resolved. Ideas of exclusivity, of peculiar fitness to govern, based on heredity and upbringing, fitted easily into the current debates about the nature of nobility; an association between office-holding and social status easily mutated into the identification of privileged access to political office with noble status.

Even when office-holding became associated with civic nobility, it need not signify that a government was exclusively oligarchical in nature: Venetian nobles, for instance, regarded their government as a mixed, not an oligarchical one. Nor can popular governments be defined by their exclusion of nobles from office, even if the Sienese were prepared to argue to Pius II that nobles could not fit easily within a popular regime. Many popular governments, or predominantly popular governments, included nobles; some had a proportion of offices reserved for them. Nevertheless, it is difficult to envisage circumstances in which a change from such a government to one in which members of a civic nobility monopolized office would not constitute a shift towards oligarchy, and it has long been accepted that the development of civic nobilities was one of the hallmarks of urban political society in sixteenth century Italy.

If there was such a thing as a “typical” regime in towns in Renaissance Italy, then it would unquestionably be a more oligarchical one in the sixteenth than in the fifteenth century. Yet elements of popular government endured in many communities, and the ideals and ideology of popular government were still influential. They survived in the many small towns and townships where the council of heads of households remained the basis of communal authority. In many larger towns and cities too, there persisted a widespread attachment—if within restricted, often closed, groups—to egalitarian principles of rotation of office, and of all those politically qualified having the right to participate in government.

Such principles could be stated without apologies. The Genoese Marco Antonio Sauli, in a pamphlet produced during the disputes between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ nobility in 1575, likened being a

citizen of a republic to membership of a chivalric order, drawing from this comparison the assertions that all members should be equal and united, that decisions by a majority should be accepted, and that there was no place for distinctions of rank. All citizens should have an equal share in the republic; the Great Council was 'the Prince of the Republic', because it had the authority to make and unmake the laws.¹ All civic strife is caused by the desire to rule, and consequently the way to avoid popular unrest ('sollevamenti popolari') would be for it 'to be in the power of every citizen to rule, or rather govern the city; for the true citizen is he who participates in public honours and administration', argued Francesco Patrizi da Cherso in a treatise on the ideal city first published in 1553.² Similar arguments could still be heard in the seventeenth century. The basic definition of citizenship was participation in public power, that is, participation in the burdens and the honours of the city, argued the Bolognese lawyer Giovan Battista Gargiaria in 1637, when asked to give an opinion on whether a man who was serving as one of the Tribuni della Plebe was eligible for another, profitable, civic office.³ In 1648 the Perugian Cesare Crispolti praised the government of his city not for equality between the citizens, but for balancing the participation of the 'powerful' and the *popolo* in a stable blend of oligarchy and democracy. 'That state has the longest life in which all parties are contented, such as the republic with which each is content because everyone has his share of the honours in it.'⁴

A more extreme view was put forward during the troubles in Genoa in 1575, when Silvestro Facio chose to use a formal speech, delivered on behalf of the college of medical doctors during the ceremonies for the coronation of the new doge, to laud not only equality between citizens, but the *popolo*. 'He who betrays the *popolo*, betrays the republic, because public affairs, as they do not belong to any

¹ Savelli, *La Repubblica oligarchica*, pp. 182–3.

² Francesco Patrizi da Cherso, 'La città felice', in Carlo Curcio (ed.), *Utopisti e riformatori sociali del Cinquecento* (Bologna, 1941), p. 130. His ideal city would, however, exclude peasants, artisans and merchants from government; and they would not be considered citizens (*ibid.*, pp. 135–6).

³ Angela De Benedictis, 'Identità politica di un governo popolare: la memoria (culturale) dei Tribuni della Plebe', in Angela De Benedictis (ed.), *Diritti in memoria, carità di patria: Tribuni della Plebe e governo popolare a Bologna (XIV–XVIII secolo)* (Bologna, 1999), pp. 71–2.

⁴ Irace, *La nobiltà bifronte*, p. 32.

private individual, of necessity belong to all, to the great and the small, the rich and the poor.' The Doge and his council should never 'deviate from the general will [volere universale] that can easily be learned from the Great Council, that represents the will of all'.⁵ This was too much for many of his audience, and caused some scandal, but serves as a reminder of the continuing significance for at least some Italians of the concept of the *popolo*, and the ideas of popular government in a period when it can be too readily assumed that they had been superseded completely by oligarchy.⁶

⁵ Savelli, *La Repubblica oligarchica*, pp. 148–9.

⁶ See the volume of essays on the *popolo*, in *Ricerche storiche*, 32, 2–3 (2002).

GLOSSARY

ammonito – banned from holding political office.

balia – extraordinary authority granted to a governing office or to an *ad hoc* commission; such authority could be limited in explicit ways or be ‘full’, implying the power to bypass or override customary procedures. Bodies granted such power were often designated ‘Balie’.

condottiere – mercenary military captains, hired under contracts known as *condotte*; the term *condotte* could also be used for other types of contracts of employment.

consiglio di richiesta – literally, ‘council of request’ – an assembly of citizens summoned individually, or as representing some government office or area of the city, to discuss and advise on a particular problem.

libertà – ‘liberty’: particularly used in relation to republics to mean government in which many citizens could participate, and to mean independence from rule by another power.

podestà – in large towns and cities, a senior official, usually from outside the town, responsible for administering much of the legal system, and maintaining law and order in the city; in smaller subject towns, the chief official, with administrative as well as legal duties. In neither case would a *podestà* have to have formal legal training; they would have lawyers on their staff, at least a notary, to assist them.

popolari, popolani – members of the *popolo*; in Siena, *popolari* could also be used to designate members of the Monte del Popolo (here written as Popolari to make the distinction clear).

popolo – ‘the people’ – can signify, as in English, both the population in general, or those outside government, as distinct from those in it. In many Italian towns and cities, the *popolo* had an institutional sense, reflecting conflicts, perhaps centuries before, between nobles or ‘magnates’ and the *popolo*, leading to the admission into government, or the taking over of government, by bodies formally representing the *popolo*.

popolo minuto – literally, the ‘little people’, used to designate the small traders, day labourers etc. who were generally (but not always) excluded from political office; sometimes used in a disparaging sense to mean ‘the mob’.

provisionati – 1) those elected to make provisions to deal with a specific matter or particular situation; 2) infantry hired on a long-term contract; as *provisionati della piazza*, those retained to guard the major government offices and the buildings in which they met.

reggimento – regime, or form of government; also often used to denote those eligible for political office, or, sometimes, those citizens who effectively controlled or influenced political decisions.

signoria – ‘lordship’, the term used to denote the chief executive body in many republican regimes; and also used to describe the government of one man, the *signore*, with or without an official title to rule.

stato – ‘state’: as in English, this term could be used in a political or territorial sense; it could also be used to mean ‘regime’. It could also be used in relation to powerful individuals, both in the sense of their landed property, their ‘estates’, or their social and public status and influence, their ‘estate’ in the archaic English sense.

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